

GENERAL NEWS

A Commentary by Don R. McCormick, Commissioner Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

There are two main considerations which must be addressed whenever a new species is introduced into an area. One is the question of what is best for the wildlife resource itself. The other consideration is the welfare of the sportsman of Kentucky, the best what happens when these two major concerns are in conflict? It is in such a situation that we are faced today with the introduction of the muskrat into the state.

It has just gone through a decision-making process, culminating in the passage of a bill by the House of Representatives on March 23rd. This bill would allow the introduction of muskrats into the state. It was passed by a vote of 100 to 20.

Our wildlife biologists believe that an earlier opening date will provide more game for hunters because game species are more abundant earlier in the fall before natural mortality begins to take a heavy toll. An earlier date would also allow those animals which have died through the winter a better chance to become breeders in the spring and help increase population.

These changes were proposed as a means of increasing populations of rabbits, quail and grouse. Since these changes were proposed for the hunters' benefit, the overriding question became one of whether or not sportsmen would be able to take them.

The proposal for the opening date was presented to the committee in the House of Representatives on March 23rd. It was passed by a vote of 100 to 20. The majority opinion of those who voted was in favor of the traditional opening date of 71 percent wanting to keep existing dates and the other 29 percent wanting to change the opening date.

The committee decided to vote opening the muskrat season until after the close of the May gun deer season. This means that this year, the season will open five days later than it traditionally would open. Depending on calendar shifts, the opening date will range anywhere from three days earlier to five days later than a "late Thursday" date.

Let me point out that the decision leaves the season dates alone and will not affect the opening of small game seasons which is made to benefit, not to the detriment of, deer hunters. Rather, it was made in the interest of deer management.

Our deer herd has grown to the extent that, in many areas of the state, we need to harvest more deer. If we are to avoid future problems of over-crowding and the property damage that sometimes occurs with high deer populations, the only answer is to harvest more deer. This is a case where biology must take away popular demand. Either an earlier or later season could effect harvest rates and under our management of deer and deer management plans.

The state's raccoon hunters also had, through a series of meetings sponsored by the League of Kentucky Sportsmen, a chance to voice their opinions on this proposal. Again, the majority wanted the existing regulations to remain unchanged.

Except for the slight delay in the opening date of the hunting season, there were no changes made to existing regulations. I think you'll be allowing me the time and space to engage in this lengthy explanation, but there is apparently some misunderstanding among some sportsmen about how and why these decisions were made. Let me assure you that the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the Fish and Wildlife Resources Commission have the best interests of Kentucky's sportsmen at all times.

But with the increasing demands being placed upon our limited wildlife resources, it is not always possible to give all groups exactly what they desire. We do, however, strive to meet their wishes within the confines of sound biological management of our wildlife resources.

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Food price index falls

By Gary Haddock
A sharp drop in poultry prices during February pulled down Kentucky's food price index by nearly half a percentage point, according to the latest market basket survey conducted by Kentucky Farm Bureau.

The price of poultry was down 1.31 percent from the previous month, the state price index for February was 100.02, compared to 100.13 in January.

The drop was due to a fall in the price of chicken, which fell 1.4 percent in February. The price of turkey was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of pork was up 0.3 percent.

The price of beef was down 0.1 percent in February, while the price of lamb was up 0.2 percent. The price of eggs was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of milk was up 0.1 percent.

The price of wheat was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of corn was up 0.1 percent. The price of soybeans was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of cotton was up 0.1 percent.

The price of sugar was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of rice was up 0.1 percent. The price of flour was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of oil was up 0.1 percent.

The price of bread was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of meat was up 0.1 percent. The price of dairy was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of produce was up 0.1 percent.

The price of clothing was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of housing was up 0.1 percent. The price of transportation was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of recreation was up 0.1 percent.

The price of education was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of health was up 0.1 percent. The price of insurance was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of other services was up 0.1 percent.

The price of utilities was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of communication was up 0.1 percent. The price of other goods was up 0.1 percent in February, while the price of other services was up 0.1 percent.

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Ford, McConnell lead drive

Today, U. S. Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Wendell Ford (D-KY) visited the House Agriculture Committee to discuss the proposed legislation to fund an agricultural research center at the University of Kentucky.

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