

CHAPTER 21
HB 211-FN - FINAL VERSION

20Feb2025... 0073h

2025 SESSION

25-0081
08/02

HOUSE BILL

211-FN

AN ACT relative to the use of air rifles for hunting game.

SPONSORS: Rep. Spillane, Rock. 2; Rep. Cole, Hills. 26; Rep. Darby, Hills. 11; Rep. Kofalt, Hills. 32; Rep. Popovici-Muller, Rock. 17; Rep. Roy, Rock. 31; Rep. McFarlane, Graf. 18; Sen. Pearl, Dist 17; Sen. Watters, Dist 4

COMMITTEE: Fish and Game and Marine Resources

ANALYSIS

This bill:

I. Allows the taking of game in New Hampshire with air rifles.

II. Further defines "air rifle."

III. Requires the fish and game commission to make rules creating and administering a hunting tag program for air rifle hunting.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Five

AN ACT relative to the use of air rifles for hunting game.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 21:1 Lawful Methods of Taking. Amend RSA 207:3, I to read as follows:

2 I. Wildlife shall be taken in the daytime between 1/2 hour before sunrise and 1/2 hour after sunset
3 with a gun, firearm, muzzleloader, or **an** air rifle **which produces a quantity of foot-pounds of kinetic energy**
4 **at the muzzle set by the executive director in rules adopted under RSA 541-A**, fired at arm's length, bow
5 and arrow or crossbow, or a rifle chambered in a straight-walled pistol cartridge of .357 caliber or greater
6 in any area where hunting is restricted to handgun or pistol, unless otherwise specifically permitted. An
7 air rifle may be used to take small game. [~~but shall not be used to take~~] **An air rifle may be used to take**
8 **moose, bear, [~~turkey,~~] or deer, however, the foot-pounds of kinetic energy at the muzzle required for each**
9 **type of animal shall be set by the executive director in rules adopted under RSA 541-A.** The executive
10 director shall specify the method and manner of taking small game, **moose, bear, or deer** with an air rifle
11 in rules adopted pursuant to RSA 541-A.

12 21:2 Illegal Night Hunting; Air Rifles. Amend RSA 208:8, I(b) to read as follows:

13 (b) Knowingly uses an artificial light between 1/2 hour after sunset and 1/2 hour before
14 sunrise to illuminate, locate, or attempt to locate wild birds or wild animals while possessing on the person
15 or in a motor vehicle, OHRV, snowmobile, boat, aircraft, or other craft propelled by mechanical power, a
16 bow and arrow, crossbow and bolt, rifle, pistol, revolver, shotgun, or muzzle-loading firearm with live
17 ammunition to fit the weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, **or an air rifle with ammunition which fits the**
18 **rifle on the person.**

19 21:3 Definitions; Air Rifle; Loaded. Amend RSA 207:1, I to read as follows:

20 I. Air rifle: A gun operated by compressed air or nonflammable gas cylinder by which a projectile
21 of any size or kind can be discharged or propelled. For use in taking small game, such device shall be not
22 less than .22 caliber and shall deliver not less than 12 foot-pounds of kinetic energy at the muzzle. **An air**
23 **rifle shall be considered loaded when a projectile is inserted in the chamber. "Air rifle" also means air gun**
24 **and pneumatic rifle.**

25 21:4 Unauthorized Use of Firearms; Air Rifles. Amend RSA 644:13 to read as follows:

26 644:13 Unauthorized Use of Firearms.

27 I. A person is guilty of a violation if, within the compact part of a town or city, such person fires or
28 discharges any cannon, gun, pistol, **air rifle** or other firearm, except by written permission of the chief of
29 police or governing body.

30 II. For the purposes of this section:

31 (a) "Blank ammunition" means a cartridge loaded with propellant and a wad, but no projectile.

32 (b) "Compact part" means the territory within a town or city comprised of the following:

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1 (1) Any nonresidential, commercial building, including, but not limited to, industrial,
2 educational, or medical buildings, plus a perimeter 300 feet wide around all such buildings without
3 permission of the owner.

4 (2) Any park, playground, or other outdoor public gathering place designated by the
5 legislative body of the city or town.

6 (3) Any contiguous area containing 6 or more buildings which are used as either part-
7 time or permanent dwellings and the spaces between them where each such building is within 300 feet of
8 at least one of the others, plus a perimeter 300 feet wide around all the buildings in such area.

9 III. Paragraph I shall not apply to the firing or discharge of a cannon, gun, pistol, *air rifle*, or other
10 firearm within the compact part of a town or city for the following events, provided that the person
11 responsible for organizing the event notifies the police department and the fire department prior to the
12 following events using blank ammunition:

13 (a) The celebration of, or practice for the celebration of, military events, military funerals,
14 national holidays, or other military or veterans commemorations, conducted by United States armed
15 forces personnel; or

16 (b) Military re-enactors registered with the secretary of state's office and who meet the
17 requirements of the state fire code pursuant to RSA 153:5; or

18 (c) Funerals or commemorative events conducted by law enforcement agencies, fire
19 departments, emergency medical services, or other public safety agencies, or official veterans
20 organizations including, but not limited to the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars.

21 21:5 Issuance of License; License Agents; Tags for Air Rifle. Amend RSA 214-A:2, VI to read as
22 follows:

23 VI. The executive director may adopt rules, pursuant to RSA 541-A, for the electronic issuance of
24 licenses, permits, and tags under the provisions of this title, by an agent or by the department. Any such
25 rules shall include procedures for verification of residency, the determination of sufficient proof of hunter
26 education or other certification requirements, and any requirements of the licensee as to the use of the
27 license, permit, or tag acquired electronically. ***The executive director may further adopt rules pursuant to***
28 ***RSA 541-A to create, issue, and sell a tag specifically for hunting with an air rifle.***

29 21:6 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

Approved: May 14, 2025
Effective Date: July 13, 2025

