

Public safety cougar removals.

(1) Definitions:

As used in this section and in the context of public safety cougar removals, the following definitions apply:

(a) "Confirmed" means qualified department staff is led to believe a cougar(s) was at the scene of the incident by interview of the complainant or observation of evidence at the scene.

(b) "Human-cougar safety incident" means aggressive or unusual behavior by a cougar which presents an actual or perceived threat to an individual.

(c) "Livestock or pet depredation" means incidents where livestock and/or pets are killed and/or injured by cougar.

(d) "Marginal cougar habitat" means those areas usually dominated by urban/suburban, developed lands with relatively high human densities.

(e) "Nuisance activity" means incidents associated with property disturbance, property damage, or livestock/pet harassment.

(f) "Preferred cougar habitat" means those areas usually dominated by rural, undeveloped lands with relatively low human densities.

(g) "Public safety need" means there exists a reasonable threat to human safety or property by one or more cougar, as indicated by the level of confirmed human-cougar safety incidents or livestock/pet depredations, and confirmed cougar sightings or nuisance activities.

(h) "Removal" means the act of killing one or more cougar with the aid of dogs.

(i) "Sighting" means a direct observation of one or more cougar, in urban or rural settings, near individuals or residences; typically more than chance observations.

(j) "Human-cougar interaction" means a human-cougar safety incident, livestock or pet depredation, cougar nuisance activity, or cougar sighting event.

(k) "Dog hunter" means a person that owns and hunts with dogs that are capable of detecting, tracking and treeing a cougar.

(2) Public safety cougar removal authorization: The commission authorizes the director to issue public safety cougar removal permits consistent with this rule. Prior to issuing public safety cougar removal permits, the department shall use other practical alternatives to address a public safety need, including livestock or pet depredations. Other practical alternatives may include, but are not limited to, general cougar hunting seasons, general public information, educational programs, information to recreational hunters, cougar depredation/kill permits, and department capture and relocation/euthanasia of specific cougars.

(3) Public safety cougar removal criteria:

(a) The commission determines that when the above practical alternatives have been utilized within a game management unit, eleven confirmed human-cougar interactions per year, of which at least four must be confirmed human-cougar safety incidents or livestock/pet depredations, therein demonstrating that the practical alternatives have been inadequate to address the public safety need. The director then is authorized by the commission to remove one or more cougar, with the aid of dogs, in a selected area of that game management unit or nearby geographic area suitable for the use of dogs. The commission authorizes the director to remove one cougar per one hundred twenty square kilometers of complaint area in preferred cougar habitat, and one cougar per four hundred thirty square kilometers of complaint area in marginal cougar habitat.

(b) If warranted by conditions of this rule, public safety cougar removal(s) will be conducted annually between December 1st and March 15th in selected areas of game management units designated by the director to address a public safety need presented by one or more cougar, except in game management units in counties where cougars will be removed to address public safety and protection of property with pilot cougar hunting seasons with the aid of dogs authorized under WAC [232-28-285](#).

(c) The department shall not target more than one hundred nine cougar during a public safety cougar removal period unless otherwise authorized by the commission.

(4) Public safety cougar removal permit issuance procedure.

(a) To participate in a public safety cougar removal, individuals must request that his/her name be placed on a list of available participants (participant list) by mailing their request to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Enforcement Program - Public Safety Cougar Removal, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091. The request must include the individual's name, address, phone number, and game management units being applied for. Individuals may apply for no more than four game management units. An individual's request to be placed on a participant list for a removal period must be postmarked no later than October 1, or be received at the department's Olympia office no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 1, during the year the removal period begins.

(b) To be eligible for a public safety cougar removal permit (permit), the participant must be a Washington resident dog hunter who, at the time of application for a permit,

possesses a valid big game license with cougar as a species option. The permit holder must use dogs while participating in a public safety cougar removal.

(c) Individuals eligible for participation in a public safety cougar removal will be randomly selected from the participant list. The department will issue a permit to the person whose name is selected from the participant list. Individuals selected will be notified by telephone or mail. Individuals selected must contact the department's enforcement program in Olympia and accept the public safety cougar removal permit within fifteen days of being notified. Failure to contact the department will result in forfeit of the permit and the individual will be placed on the participant list for later selections. Permits may not be sold or reassigned.

(d) Permit holders and all individuals who will accompany the permit holder must complete the department's public safety cougar removal education course prior to participating in a public safety cougar removal.

(5) Public safety cougar removals: Quota system and participation in cougar removal.

(a) Public safety cougar removals will be based on a quota system, where permit holders may hunt cougar until the allotted numbers of cougar have been killed from each game management unit or March 15, whichever is first.

(b) Permit holders who harvest a cougar before January 15 may continue hunting for a second cougar with dogs. The permit holder must purchase an additional cougar transport tag to hunt and harvest one additional cougar and the permit holder will be issued a second permit. Permit holders who harvest a cougar after January 15 are not eligible to harvest a second cougar with dogs.

(c) To verify if the cougar removal season is open or closed in each game management unit, the permit holders shall notify the department's enforcement program in Olympia within twenty-four hours prior to exercising a public safety cougar removal permit.

(d) No more than four total individuals may participate per public safety cougar removal, including the permit holder(s). Only the permit holder, whose name appears on the permit, may take a cougar.

(e) Hunters killing a cougar during a public safety cougar removal must notify the department's enforcement program in Olympia within twenty-four hours after harvesting the cougar.

(f) The department reserves the right to accompany permit holders while participating in a public safety cougar removal.

(6) Public safety cougar removal general requirements.

(a) A valid big game hunting license which includes cougar as a species option is

required to hunt cougar. One cougar transport tag is included with a big game license that has cougar as a species option. A second cougar transport tag must be purchased to take a second cougar. Individuals may participate in multiple public safety cougar removals, but must purchase a cougar transport tag for each cougar removed. Purchases in excess of two cougar transport tags must be made at department offices.

(b) It is unlawful to kill or possess spotted cougar kittens or adult cougars accompanied by spotted kittens. Individuals selected for a public safety cougar removal permit may take one cougar per permit.

(c) Hunters may use any lawful big game modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader equipment for hunting cougar. The use of dogs to hunt cougar is prohibited except during a public safety cougar removal.

(d) Any person who takes a cougar must notify the department within twenty-four hours of kill (excluding legal state holidays) and provide the hunter's name, date and location of kill, and sex of animal. The raw pelt of a cougar must be sealed by an authorized department employee within seventy-two hours of the notification of kill. Any person who takes a cougar must present the cougar skull, in such a manner that teeth and biological samples can be extracted, to an authorized department employee at the time of sealing.

(e) The public safety cougar removal permit (permit) belongs to the state of Washington. The permit holder may be required to return to or turn over to the department the permit when, in the judgment of the department, the permit holder violates any conditions of the permit, violates trespass laws while acting under this permit, or violates any other criminal law or hunting regulation of the state while acting under this permit. If the permit holder is required to return to or turn over to the department the permit, the permit holder may request an appeal of that action in accordance with chapter [34.05](#) RCW. Appeal request shall be filed in writing and returned within twenty days of the date of action and be addressed to WDFW Legal Services Office, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091.

[Statutory Authority: RCW [77.12.047](#), [77.12.040](#), [77.12.020](#), [77.12.570](#), [77.12.210](#). 08-17-034 (Order 08-197), § 232-12-243, filed 8/13/08, effective 9/13/08. Statutory Authority: RCW [77.12.047](#). 04-21-036 (Order 04-284), § 232-12-243, filed 10/14/04, effective 11/14/04; 03-17-037 (Order 03-186), § 232-12-243, filed 8/14/03, effective 9/14/03; 02-17-013 (Order 02-183), § 232-12-243, filed 8/9/02, effective 9/9/02; 01-20-011 (Order 01-198), § 232-12-243, filed 9/20/01, effective 10/21/01.]