

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2043

BY Delegate Burkhammer

[Introduced on February 12, 2025; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization]

- 1 A BILL to amend and reenact §20-2-5j of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
 2 authorizing the use of drones and dogs while hunting and describe their administration.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. WILDLIFE RESOURCES.

Part I. Wildlife Management.

§20-2-5j. Leashed dogs and/or drones for tracking or locating mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear.

- 1 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, a person who is legally
 2 hunting and reasonably believes he or she has mortally wounded a deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or
 3 bear may use a leashed dogs dog and/or a drone on his or her property or lease to track and locate
 4 the mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear. The hunter is also permitted to use a dog
 5 handler of a leashed dogs dog and/or a licensed drone pilot to track and locate the mortally
 6 wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear. The hunter or the dog handler shall always maintain
 7 physical control of the leashed dogs dog. Only one leashed dog per handler may be used and, if
 8 the hunter is using a dog handler, the hunter may not handle additional dogs for the handler.

- 9 (b) The act of tracking a mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear with a dog, or
 10 locating with a drone, is hunting and the hunter, and handler, or licensed drone pilot are subject to
 11 all applicable laws and rules. It is unlawful for a hunter, licensed drone pilot, or dog handler to track
 12 or locate deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear with leashed dogs or a drone under the provisions of
 13 this section unless he or she is in possession of a valid hunting license issued pursuant to this
 14 article or is a person excepted from licensing requirements pursuant to this article, and all other
 15 lawful authorizations as prescribed in this article. The hunter shall accompany the dog handler and
 16 only the hunter may kill a mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear. However, any
 17 hunter who is physically unable to accompany the handler in the tracking and locating of the
 18 mortally wounded deer, elk, wild turkey, boar, or bear may designate the handler to kill the deer,

19 elk, wild turkey, boar, or bear when located by the handler. The deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear
20 shall count toward the bag limit of the hunter who fired the initial shot.

21 (c) Any dog handler or any drone operator providing tracking services for profit must be
22 licensed as an outfitter or guide pursuant to §20-2-23 of this code. Any drone operator not
23 operating on property they own or lease must be licensed according to FAA Part 107. The Director
24 shall provide a list of licensed dog handlers and drone operators to the public prior to September
25 1st of each year.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize the use of drones and dogs while hunting and describe their administration.

This section is new; therefore, strike-throughs and underscoring have been omitted.