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The *Saeima*¹ has adopted
and the President has proclaimed the following Law:

Hunting Law

Chapter I General Provisions

Section 1.

The following terms are used in this Law:

- 1) **limited game animals** – game animals for which a hunting limit has been specified;
- 2) **hunting permit** – a document that allows the hunting of one limited game animals in the area indicated in the permit;
- 3) **hunting district** – year-round hunting area that is managed by the one user of hunting rights;
- 4) **hunting area** – area useful for game animals to live free and be available for hunting;
- 5) **hunting products** – game animal trophies, meat and offal acquired as a result of hunting ;
- 6) **hunting resources** – all game animals in the territory of Latvia;
- 7) **hunting tools** – snares, traps or other tools employed in the hunting of game animals;
- 8) **hunting management** – a system for the utilisation of natural resources, which simultaneously with the acquisition of hunting products ensures the preservation of an economically permissible number of animals and the environment required for game animals;
- 9) **hunting rights** – the rights of the landowner or user to hunt in his or her land parcel in accordance with the procedures specified in this Law and regulatory enactments regulating hunting. A landowner or user may use the hunting rights solely for himself or herself or transfer them to another person;
- 10) **user of hunting rights** – a land owner or user of the land parcel owned or used by him or her that includes hunting areas complying with the requirements specified in this Law, or a person, to whom a land owner or user in accordance with the procedures specified by the Law on the basis of agreement has transferred his or her hunting rights;
- 11) **game animal trophy** - antlers together with the skull of the game animal (upper jaw or frontal bone), tusks, skulls and skins;
- 12) **game animals** – mammals and birds living in the wild, the hunting of which is permitted in accordance with the regulatory enactments regulating hunting;
- 13) **hunter's seasonal card** – a document issued annually that gives the right to participate in hunting during a certain season;
- 14) **hunter** – a person who in accordance with the procedures specified in this Law has received a hunter's certificate; and

¹ The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

15) **unlimited game animals** – animals for which a hunting limit has not been specified.

Section 2.

The purpose of this Law is to regulate the basic rules of hunting management.

Section 3.

(1) Hunting is the set of operations or separate operations, when game animals are tracked, caught, captured, injured or killed by using hunting firearms, tools, methods or techniques. The hunting of stray dogs and cats in hunting areas, as well as escaped animals that were kept in captivity (upon a request in writing of an owner to a user of hunting rights) shall be the equivalent to hunting. Free roaming cats and dogs without a muzzle or registration badge shall be recognised as stray dogs (except for pure bred hunting dogs) and cats in any season in hunting areas farther than 200 metres from populated areas or residential houses.

(2) Game animal species shall be specified by the Cabinet.

(3) Hunting terms, as well as the cases in which hunting is possible outside hunting terms, shall be specified by the Cabinet.

(4) The State Forest Service in accordance with the state of the relevant animal population and phonological situation is entitled to change the hunting terms specified by the Cabinet by not more than one calendar month.

Section 4.

Game animals become the property of natural or legal persons only then, if they have been hunted in accordance with the procedures specified in this Law and other regulatory enactments regulating hunting.

Section 5.

(1) It is prohibited to misappropriate the hunting products. The hunting products may be accepted for realisation, processing, transportation or storage only from persons who can present the appropriate hunting permit or a copy thereof.

(2) Procedures to be taken in respect of game animals the cause of death of which is not hunting, capture or keeping in captivity shall be specified by the Cabinet.

Section 6.

Hunting resources shall be used so as to ensure the protection and preservation of the population of game animal species, gene pool and their habitat.

Section 7.

A hunting season is a period of time from 1 April up to 31 March of the next year.

Section 8.

The obligations and rights of a head of a hunt, as well as the use of purebred hunting dogs in hunting shall be determined by the Cabinet.

Section 9.

Hunting (except for the hunting of water birds in public bodies of water) shall be notified to the State Forest Service. The Cabinet shall determine the procedures for notifying about hunt.

Section 10.

(1) Game animals may be hunted or caught for research, displaying in museums, growing in another place or to be kept in captivity, as well as to keep in captivity, if for each time a permit has been received from the State Forest Service.

(2) Game animals may be brought into Latvia, if for each time a permit has been received from the State Forest Service.

Section 11.

Non-huntable wild animals may be obtained, hunted or kept in captivity, if for each time a permit has been received from the Nature Protection Board.

Chapter II Hunter's Certificate and Rights to Hunt

Section 12.

A hunter's certificate is a document which is necessary in order to receive a hunting permit, hunter's seasonal card and authorisation for the acquisition of a hunting firearm, as well as in order to hunt in accordance with the procedures specified in this Law and other regulatory enactments regulating hunting.

Section 13.

(1) Hunters to whom an authorisation for the possession of a hunting firearm has been issued by the State police institution are allowed to hunt with hunting firearms.

(2) Procedures for the utilisation of a hunting firearm and hunting ammunition, as well as safety requirements to be observed during hunting, shall be determined by the Cabinet.

Section 14.

(1) A hunter's certificate shall be issued to persons by the State Forest Service if the restrictions specified in the Law on Handling of Weapons do not apply to them, after they have passed the examination before a Hunter's examination board.

(2) The Cabinet shall determine the procedures for training hunters and heads of a hunt, the knowledge and practical skills examination programme, as well as the procedures for the issue of a hunter's certificate and head of a hunt's licence .

(3) If a hunter's certificate, head of a hunt's licence, hunter's seasonal card or hunting permit has been stolen or lost for reasons beyond the control of the owner thereof, the State Forest Service shall delete these documents from the relevant register and issue a new hunter's

certificate, head of a hunt's licence, hunter's seasonal card or hunting permit on the basis of the hunter's submission and explanation.

Section 15.

(1) The State Forest Service shall approve a Hunters examination board . The representatives of the State Forest Service, the Ministry of Environment, the State Police and local government shall be included in the composition of the board.

(2) The State Forest Service shall technically provide and finance the operation of the Hunters examination board . The Minister for Agriculture shall determine the payment for taking the examination .

Section 16.

Foreign citizens, who do not have a permanent residency permit for the Republic of Latvia, may hunt in the territory of Latvia if they have documents issued by the relevant competent authority of a foreign state, which approve the right to hunt in their own country, and they have received a permit in the State Forest Service that allows hunters of a foreign state to hunt in the territory of Latvia, and as well as that they have received a hunter's seasonal card. The referred to persons may use hunting firearms in hunting, if they have received an authorisation from the State Police in accordance with the procedures specified in regulatory enactments.

Section 17.

Hunting in a hunting district shall take place in accordance with the hunting district plan registered with the State Forest Service. The content of a hunting district plan shall be determined by the Cabinet.

Section 18.

It is permitted to hunt game water fowl, American mink and raccoon dog in public bodies of water and towpaths thereof without the co-ordination with a user of hunting rights in a hunting district of which the relevant body of water is located.

Chapter III Hunting Areas, Hunting Quota and Hunting Permit

Section 19.

(1) The minimum hunting areas, in which limited game animals are allowed to be hunted in the relevant hunting district, shall be the following:

1) for roe deer hunting – not less than 200 hectares, including forest land and unenclosed utilised agricultural area;

2) for hunting wild boar, deer does and fawns – not less than 1000 hectares;

3) for Red stag hunting -- not less than 2000 hectares; and

4) for moose hunting – not less than 2500 hectares;

(2) A forest tract or parts thereof and separate forest plots shall be included in the hunting areas of elks, deer and wild boars.

(3) If a hunting district does not comply with the requirements specified in Paragraphs one or two of this Section, the users of hunting rights may enter into mutual agreements regarding the care of limited game animals species and the organisation of hunting in adjacent hunting districts.

(4) The Minister for Agriculture shall determine the procedures by which the payment for use of hunting rights are to be determined in the hunting districts under the jurisdiction of or owned by the State.

Section 20.

(1) The State Forest Service shall determine the largest permissible hunting quota for limited game animals in hunting areas each year, on the basis of the data record-keeping of game animals.

(2) The record-keeping of game animals shall be organised by the State Forest Service, which also carries it out in the territories of national parks and nature reserves, involving the administration of the relevant national park or nature reserve. Record-keeping and monitoring of particular game animals may be carried out for special purposes.

(3) Game animals shall be accounted for and the maximum permissible amount of hunting of limited game animals in a hunting area calculated in accordance with the methodology approved by the Minister for Agriculture, except for hunting areas in the territories of national parks and nature reserves, unless otherwise specified in the protection and utilisation regulations thereof or nature protection plans.

Section 21.

A hunting permit and hunter's seasonal card shall be required for the hunting of limited game animals, but a hunter's seasonal card – for the hunting of unlimited game animals.

Section 22.

(1) The State Forest Service shall issue permits to users of hunting rights and hunter's seasonal cards to hunters in accordance with a limit.

(2) If hunting areas are in the territory of a national park or nature reserve, the relevant administration shall issue hunting permits to users of hunting rights and hunter's seasonal cards to hunters.

(3) Forms for hunting permits for game animals limited by the administration of national parks and nature reserves and hunter's seasonal cards shall be received from the State Forest Service and information shall be submitted to the State Forest Service regarding the number of animals hunted within two months after the end of a hunting season, as well as unused hunting permits shall be returned to the State Forest Service and hunter's seasonal cards not issued to hunters shall be annulled.

(4) Hunters shall submit the information regarding the unlimited game animals hunted within a month after the end of a hunting season, but the users of hunting rights shall submit used hunting permits within a month after the hunt to the authorities which issued the hunter's seasonal cards or hunting permits.

(5) If the requirements referred to in Paragraph four of this Section are not fulfilled, new hunting permits and hunter's seasonal cards shall not be issued.

Section 23.

(1) The State fee for the issuance of a hunter's certificate, hunter's seasonal card and hunting permit, for the issuance of a permit for a foreign hunter to hunt in the territory of Latvia and for the issuance of a permit to export hunting trophies from Latvia shall be paid in accordance with the procedures and in the amount specified by the Cabinet.

(2) The Cabinet shall determine the procedures by which hunting trophies are to be exported from Latvia.

Chapter IV Illegal Hunting

Section 24.

(1) Hunting is recognised as illegal in the following cases:

1) hunting in such period of time, which does not comply with the hunting season specified in the regulatory enactments regulating hunting;

2) hunting without a hunter's certificate, hunter's seasonal card (does not apply to beaters), hunting permit or authorisation for possession of a hunting firearm;

3) hunting in such cases when a hunting permit is not completed at the place where a limited game animal has been hunted or injured;

4) hunting in prohibited areas;

5) hunting of unlimited game animals without the consent of the user of hunting rights, except for the cases specified in Section 18 of these Regulations;

6) hunting in such conditions when animals are fleeing from natural calamities;

7) hunting while using the following illegal means of hunting, tools, methods and techniques:

a) "bird lime", blind or mutilated animals as bait,

b) sound recordings,

c) artificial light sources (except for the hunting of wild boars, deer hinds and fawns in places of damage, as well as fox and raccoon dog hunting),

d) mirrors and other blinding devices;

e) laser type sights and night sights with electronic magnification or image transformation,

f) nets, which work non-selectively in accordance with the terms for use or conditions for use,

g) leg-hold traps which work non-selectively in accordance with terms for use or conditions for use

h) crossbows, bows,

i) semi-automatic or automatic weapons in which more than three rounds of ammunition can be loaded at one time or with which it is possible to shoot in bursts,

j) aircraft, moving motorised land and water vehicles,

k) weapons that are not classified as hunting firearms;

8) hunting using the following prohibited generally dangerous means of hunting, hunting tools, techniques and methods:

a) trap-holes, loops, baited hooks, setting up of sharp objects on animal tracks;

b) electric or electronic devices that are capable of killing or making an animal unconscious;

c) explosives, trip mechanisms,

- d) poisons and poisoned or immobilising bait;
 - e) gases or smoke; or
- 9) keeping of game animals in captivity, if a permit from the State Forest Service has not been received.

Chapter V

Supervision of Hunting Resources and Hunting Control

Section 25.

The State Forest Service, the Ministry of Environment and the State Police shall perform supervision of the observance of this Law and other regulatory enactments regulating hunting, in accordance with the competence thereof.

Section 26.

The procedures of hunting shall be documented. The Cabinet shall determine the procedures for the documentation of hunting.

Section 27.

(1) Upon the request of such persons who are performing supervision of the observance of this Law and other regulatory enactments regulating the hunting and hunting control, the duty of a hunter shall be:

1) to present the firearms at his or her disposal and the authorisation for the possession thereof, as well as ammunition, hunting tools, hunting documents and hunting products;

2) to provide orally or in writing an explanation regarding the hunting in which he or she is partaking in.

(2) If illegal hunting has taken place, persons who are undertaking the supervision of the observance of this Law and other regulatory enactments regulating hunting and hunting control are entitled to suspend hunting documents and withdraw from use firearms, ammunition, hunting tools and hunting products.

Section 28.

If any of authorities referred to in Section 25 of this Law has temporarily suspended or debarred a hunter's certificate or withdrawn a hunting firearm from use, it shall notify thereof the State Police institution, which have issued an authorisation for the possession of hunting firearm, within three working days.

Section 29.

(1) The amount of the material losses which game animals have caused to agriculture and forestry shall be determined by the commission established by the State Forest Service, but in the territories of national parks and nature reserves – by the relevant administration. A victim, to whom the losses have been caused, a user of hunting rights and, if necessary, specialists of the Rural Support Service of the Ministry of Agriculture shall be invited to participate in the work of the commission. The commission shall determine the losses in accordance with the methodology approved by the Minister for agriculture.

(2) A user of hunting rights shall be liable for the losses caused by game animals, unless otherwise provided for in the agreement regarding the transferring of hunting rights.

Section 30.

Losses, which have been caused by natural persons or legal persons violating the requirements specified in this Law or other Regulatory enactments regulating hunting, as well as the value of hunting products obtained illegally shall be reimbursed in accordance with the procedures and in the amount specified by the Cabinet. This reimbursement shall be paid into the State basic budget, but from 1 January 2005 – in the Hunting Management Development Fund.

Chapter VI Hunting Management Development Fund

Section 31.

(1) In order to develop hunting management, a Game Animal Management development Fund shall be established. The holder of the Fund shall be the Ministry of Agriculture.

(2) The assets of the Hunting Management Development Fund shall be formed from :

1) grants from the following revenue of the State basic budget:

a) the full amount of the State fee for the issuance of hunting permits and for the issuance of authorisations for the exporting of hunting trophies from Latvia;

b) the full amount of the State fee for the issuance of hunter's certificates, permits for hunters of foreign states to hunt in the territory of Latvia and hunter's seasonal cards,

c) compensation of the losses that have been caused by natural persons or legal persons violating the requirements specified in this Law or other regulatory enactments regulating the hunting, as well as compensation for the value of hunting products obtained illegally;

2) donations.

(3) The assets of Hunting Management Development Fund shall be utilised:

1) for the monitoring of game animals and additional protection measures of populations;

2) for the scientific research of game animals and populations thereof;

3) for participating in international hunting organisations; and

4) for the educating of hunters.

(4) The Cabinet shall approve the by-laws of the Hunting Management Development Fund by.

Transitional Provisions

1. With the coming into force of this Law, the Hunting Law (*Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs*, 1995, No. 13; 1997, No. 14; 2000, No. 9) is repealed.

2. By 1 January 2004, the Cabinet shall issue the regulations referred to in this Law.

3. Until the day of coming into force of the relevant Cabinet regulations, but not longer than until 1 January 2004, the following Cabinet Regulations shall be applicable insofar as they are not in contradiction with this Law:

1) Cabinet Regulation No. 251 of 8 August 1995, Hunting Regulations (*Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs*, 1995, No. 19; 1997, No. 21);

2) Cabinet Regulation No. 398 of 14 November 1995, Regulations regarding Amount of Compensation for Losses Caused to Hunting Management (*Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs*, 2000, No. 24);

3) Cabinet Regulation No. 478 of 13 November 2001, By-laws of the Hunting Management Development Fund (*Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs*, 2001, No. 24).

4. Hunter's certificates and head of a hunt's licences issued until the day of coming into force of this Law shall also be valid after the day of coming into force of this Law.

5. Section 31, Paragraph two, Clause 1, Sub-paragraph c) of this Law shall come into force on 1 January 2005.

Informative Reference to European Union Directives

This Law contains legal norms arising from Directives 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC.

This Law has been adopted by the *Saeima* on 8 July 2003.

Acting for the President,
Chairperson of the *Saeima*

I. Ūdre

Rīga, 23 July 2003