



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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## **Representative Corey Mock**

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**COMMITTEES:**  
Appropriations

March 2, 2023

Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee  
North Dakota State Capitol – Peace Garden Room  
HB 1233 (Youth Deer Hunting Season)

Chairman Dale Patten & Members of the Senate ENR Committee:

There are many enriching aspects of being a legislator, but nothing tops the opportunity to introduce legislation on behalf of our young(er) constituents. HB 1233 was brought forward by an apprentice hunter, Avery Buckholz, and her father, Chris Buckholz. Together, they recognized unintended barriers for youth deer hunters and wanted to help find policy solutions.

I encourage you to look online and read Avery's testimony; she was instrumental in HB 1233 passing the House with nearly unanimous support.

North Dakota's youth big game apprenticeship program was created during the 2009 legislative session. Intended to provide a guided and interactive introduction into hunting, this program allowed 11–13-year-old children to receive an antlerless deer gun tag for the exclusive use during a (newly created) youth deer season. Apprentice hunters must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designated adult mentor.

North Dakota Game & Fish can speak to the success of this program; anecdotally it has received high praise from families across the state.

A standard lottery-issued deer gun tag is available to hunters beginning in the year of their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Additionally, Game & Fish allows 14–15-year-old emerging hunters to receive a once-in-a-lifetime statewide any deer tag (except antlered mule deer in select units).

Today, there are 2 distinct white-tail deer gun (non-muzzleloader) seasons in North Dakota:

- **Youth Season**

- Two consecutive weekends in September (9 days)
- Open to youth apprentice hunters (ages 11, 12, and 13) with a nonlottery, statewide youth antlerless tag
- Open to youth hunters (ages 14 and 15) with a nonlottery, statewide any deer tag (except antlered mule deer in select units)

- **Regular Season**

- Three consecutive weekends in November (16 days)
- Open to all hunters with a lottery-issued tag (age 14+)
- Open to youth hunters (ages 14 and 15) with a nonlottery, statewide any deer tag (except antlered mule deer in select units)

While access to a dedicated youth hunting season is a net positive for emerging hunters, there are complicating factors that may limit or even dampen the experience for individuals trying to fill their first tag.

School activities are usually in full swing, with tournaments, meets, and practices keeping family schedules overwhelmingly full. Additional factors youth hunters may be facing in September include seasonably warm weather, tighter proximity of fawn, tracking difficulties, and unharvested fields.

Removing these 10 words from line 18 provides Game & Fish discretion to issue antlerless white-tail deer gun tags for 11–13-year-olds for use during the youth and/or regular deer season. This added flexibility will allow young hunters and their families an expanded opportunity to enjoy and appreciate one of North Dakota's greatest pastimes.

Thank you for your consideration and support. I respectfully request favorable consideration on HB 1233.