

South Dakota - Game, Fish, and Parks

Petition for Rule Change

A new form was just submitted from the <http://gfp.sd.gov/> website with the following information:

ID: 250

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Rule Identification: ARSD 41:08:01:08.03

Describe Change: "The jackrabbit hunting season shall be open statewide from September 1 through March 31. The daily limit is one (1) jackrabbit, and the possession limit is two (2) jackrabbits. Hunting hours shall be from sunrise to sunset, mirroring the regulations for Cottontail Rabbit (ARSD 41:06:34:01)."

Reason for Change: Conservation Awareness: Transitioning jackrabbits from "unprotected" status to a regulated game species elevates their profile as a vital symbol of the South Dakota prairie. A regulated season signals to the public that this species has inherent value and requires stewardship. Response to Population Decline: While habitat loss is a primary driver, jackrabbit numbers are at historic lows in many regions. Implementing a conservative bag limit ensures that hunting does not become a compounding factor in areas where populations are struggling to recover. Consistency in Small Game Management: Jackrabbits share similar habitats and ecological roles with cottontails. Aligning these seasons provides a simplified, consistent regulatory framework for hunters. Promotion of Ethical Harvest: Establishing daylight-only hunting hours and specific bag limits encourages fair chase and discourages the "varmint" mentality currently associated with year-round, unlimited harvest. While jackrabbits in South Dakota are currently considered an unprotected species with a year-round open season and no bag limits, there has been significant recent activity regarding petitions to establish a regulated season. In March 2025, the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) Commission unanimously voted to deny a petition (#234) that requested the implementation of a regulated jackrabbit season. This was submitted by the Jerauld Co. Sportsmen Club. They have asked the South Dakota Wildlife Federation to pursue this action further to increase awareness.