

Legal hunter orange

WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T WEAR IN ONTARIO



This is the minimum amount of hunter orange you should wear (no matter your quarry) to stay legal when a big game gun season is open.

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Ontario's hunter orange (formerly called blaze orange) regulations came into effect on September 1, 1997. That's almost twenty years ago, yet each autumn at hunt camps around the province, debates continue about what kind and amount of hunter orange clothing and gear are legally required. The legal language used in the regulations can be confusing:

"A hunter orange garment and head cover must be worn. The hunter orange garment must cover a min-

imum of 400 square inches (2,580 square centimetres) above the waist and be visible from all sides (a vest made up of only a front and rear panel may not be visible from all sides). The hunter orange garment must be solid, and cannot contain open mesh or camouflage orange. A garment with 400 square inches of hunter orange that also includes retro-reflective silver or yellow stripes meets the requirement.."

Let's decipher what this means...

The general rule on wearing orange

While a gun season for deer, elk, or moose is in progress, all non-waterfowl hunters need to wear legal orange (even if they're not after bear, elk, or moose). This includes bow hunters, falconers, bear hunters, and trappers.



Waterfowl

Hunter orange is not required for anyone hunting migratory game birds (except woodcock), or double-crested cormorants.



Bear hunters

All bear hunters are required to wear hunter orange (even outside of active moose, elk, or deer gun seasons) except when in a tree stand. So orange must be worn when heading into and out of the woods, hunting on the ground, or tracking and retrieving bears.



Upland vests

Some upland or small-game hunting vests contain a bit of hunter orange. These are not acceptable when a big-game gun season is in progress. You should swap to an all-orange vest when a deer, elk or moose gun season is open in your area.



Ground blinds

Hunters using ground blinds should take steps to make their blind clearly visible to other hunters who may be in the area. Adding hunter orange material to the outside is a good way to mark a ground blind.

Wear it anyway

Though not legally required, wearing some hunter orange when heading into or out of a turkey hunting spot is a good idea. This can be applied to any season and any hunt.

Use this table to cross reference what you're after, with what season is open in your area to determine whether or not you need to wear orange. If you're unsure, wear it!

Hunt open in your area

Your quarry, bow or gun

	Deer gun season	Moose gun season	Bear season (any)	Elk season (any)	Bow only season
Deer	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Not req'd
Moose	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Not req'd
Turkey	Mandatory	Mandatory	Recommended	Mandatory	Not req'd
Bear	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Small game	Mandatory	Mandatory	Recommended	Mandatory	Not req'd
Migratory bird	Not req'd*	Not req'd*	Not req'd*	Not req'd*	Not req'd*

* With the exception of woodcock, for which hunter orange is mandatory.

What clothing is NOT legal

Despite what your buddies might tell you, or what your local shop sells, the following clothing is not OK to hunt in during a big game gun season in Ontario:

All-mesh vest



Faded or off-colour clothing



Broken/patterned orange



Yellow high-viz gear



Vests that don't connect at the sides



No orange hat



Not recommended

Although it's not illegal to have your orange partially covered, doing so defeats the purpose of wearing it. You can wear a backpack over your hunter-orange vest but it can't completely cover the back of the vest.

The better option is to use a hunter-orange backpack, use a hunter-range backpack cover, or add a hunter-orange panel to the back of your pack.



SPECIAL NOTE

Hats

The hunter orange on the head cover must not contain camouflage material. A hunter orange ball cap may have open mesh, a peak or brim color other than hunter orange and a crest or logo which does not completely cover the hunter orange on the side where it is affixed.

Under helmets?

When you are “hunting” you need to wear a hunter orange hat, even on an ATV. So your option under the law while ATVing is to either have an orange helmet, or to wear an orange hat under your helmet.