

Nebraskans will see a longer season of grouse hunting which opened Sept. 1, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The grouse (prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse) season closes Jan. 31, 2012.

"In general, grouse numbers are lower than last year across their range, based on the Rural Mail Carrier survey," said Jeff Lusk, Game and Parks upland game program manager. "The numbers in the Sandhills still should be good, however, and will offer the best opportunities.

A special permit is required to hunt grouse east of U.S. Highway 81. A Nebraska hunting permit and habitat stamp are required of anyone, except residents under age 16, who hunts grouse in the state.

The special permits are limited to one per hunter and available on a first-come, first-served basis. To request a special permit, call Game and Parks at 402-471-5597, visit the Lincoln headquarters, or send a postcard to: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Attn: Grouse Permits, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503.

The postcard must include the following: name, address, date of birth, telephone number and 2011 hunting permit number or lifetime hunting permit number. Residents ages 12 to 15 must submit a hunter education number. Those not required to purchase a hunting permit must provide documentation of such exemption.

The daily bag and possession limits east of U.S. 81 are three and three. West of U.S. 81, the limits are three and 12.