



# Crossbow Hunting in New Brunswick

2022

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## HUNTING LAWS

In New Brunswick, crossbows are recognized as a firearm under the *Fish and Wildlife Act* and are legal for hunting all game species including migratory game birds. All bow and crossbow hunters born on, or after, January 1, 1981 and all first-time bow or crossbow hunters must complete a recognized Bow Hunter Education course to hunt with a bow or crossbow.

Crossbow hunters are subject to many of the same hunting laws as bow and gun hunters. Some of these include:

- It is illegal to discharge a crossbow within 100 metres (109 yards) of a dwelling, school, playground, athletic field, solid waste disposal site, or place of business.
- Crossbows used to hunt deer, moose and bear must have a minimum draw weight of 68 kg (150 lbs) and be fitted with broadheads no less than 20 mm (7/8 in) in width.
- It is illegal to carry a cocked and loaded crossbow upon any vehicle including all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles.
- Crossbows must be cased outside of legal hunting times in a resort of wildlife.
- Crossbows used for hunting purposes must be equipped with a safety.
- Crossbow hunters must wear a solid or camouflage fluorescent hunter orange jacket or vest and a hat of solid fluorescent hunter orange from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 while hunting. Exempt from this requirement are bow and crossbow hunters licensed to hunt deer once they are in a tree stand or ground blind during the deer archery season only.



As a crossbow hunter it is your responsibility to know the hunting laws specific to crossbows:

- 1. Provincial regulations:** Refer to the current *Hunt and Trap* book or consult the *Fish and Wildlife Act* and its regulations for the most up to date description of provincial hunting laws pertaining to crossbows.
- 2. Federal regulations:** Refer to the *Migratory Birds Regulations* for a description of federal regulations related to the use of crossbows for hunting waterfowl.

### DO I NEED TO REGISTER MY CROSSBOW?

Under the federal *Firearms Act* you do not need a firearms licence or registration certificate to possess any type of bow, including a crossbow.

Crossbows that can be aimed and fired with one hand and crossbows with an overall length of 50 cm (19.7 inches) or less are prohibited.

For further information about the possession of crossbows visit the RCMP web site or contact the provincial Firearms Office at 1 800-731-4000.

### CROSSBOW BASICS

Crossbows work on essentially the same principle as a bow – energy stored in the limbs of the crossbow is transferred to the arrow upon release of its string. Crossbows have a limited range, similar to that of a bow, for hunting purposes and require careful estimation of the distance to the target to ensure a precise shot.

A crossbow's limbs are shorter and heavier than those of a bow and are mounted horizontally to a stock. The crossbow arrow, or bolt, is launched from a grooved track with the aid of a trigger system. Many models feature a scope sight.

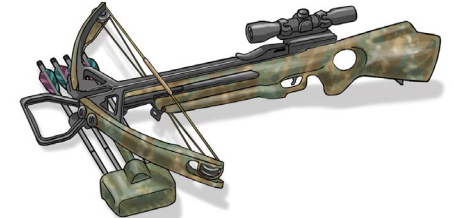
The string of a crossbow travels about half the distance as that of a compound bow when shooting an arrow. Due to this shorter “power stroke”, crossbows must have more than twice the draw weight of a compound bow to produce the same arrow speed.

**Recurve crossbows** feature recurve limbs that sweep back when cocked and have few moving parts to break or maintain.

**Compound crossbows** are based on a system of cams, wheels, and cables. Their limbs may be split or solid and are generally shorter than those of a recurve crossbow.



RECURVE CROSSBOW



COMPOUND CROSSBOW

Crossbow features and safety mechanisms differ from model to model. Read and understand the owner's manual that came with your crossbow before using it.

### CROSSBOW BOLTS

Crossbow arrows, or **bolts**, differ from conventional arrows in that they are shorter and usually feature a flat-capped or half-moon nock rather than a notched nock as used by conventional arrows. Crossbow bolts must be the right length, weight, and stiffness (spine) for the type of crossbow they are used with. Shooting improperly matched bolts will damage your crossbow and create a safety hazard to you and those around you. Check your owner's manual or contact your local archery shop for the correct bolt requirements of your crossbow.



## COCKING DEVICES

Crossbows are usually cocked with a cocking aid such as a rope cocker or hand-crank. Rope cockers consist of a sturdy cord, handles, and pulley-equipped hooks that attach to the crossbow string. The crossbow is cocked in a single motion by standing up while pulling on the wrist straps or handles. Hand-cranks attach to the stock of the crossbow and work on the same principle as that of a boat winch. The use of cocking aids reduces the effort required to cock a crossbow by 50% or more.



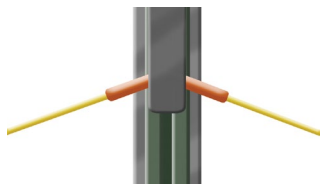
ROPE COCKER



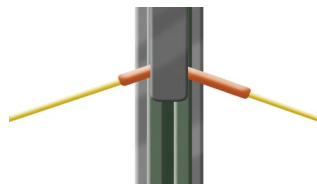
HAND-CRANK

## STRING POSITION

When cocking a crossbow it is crucial that the string's serving area be centered on either side of the latch system to ensure consistent shooting. If the crossbow is cocked so that the string is off-centre, it will shift the location of the arrow hits to one side of the target. The use of a cocking aid such as a cocking rope or hand crank helps ensure centre alignment of the string. You can also mark your string with a permanent marker to make it easier to determine if it is properly centered.



CORRECT POSITIONING



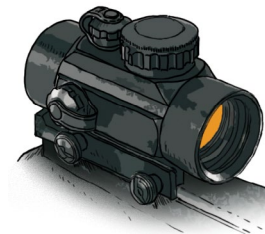
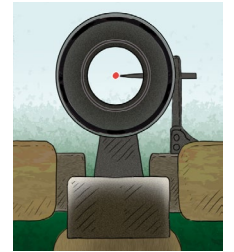
INCORRECT POSITIONING

## SIGHT SYSTEMS

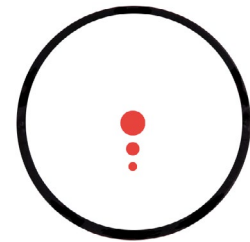
Sight systems for crossbows include the peep/pin, red dot, and scope sights. The peep/pin is a basic sight that consists of a rear peep with a blade and pin front sight. Red dot and scope sights are designed to work specifically with crossbows and permit a clear view of the target at close range. They usually feature multiple crosshairs or aiming points that correspond to distances of 20, 30, and 40 metres (yards).



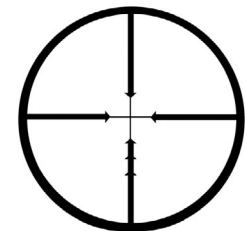
PEEP / PIN SIGHT



RED DOT SIGHT



SCOPE SIGHT



### SIGHTING-IN YOUR CROSSBOW

Sighting-in your crossbow is essential to ensuring accurate and humane shot placement.



- Choose a suitable location such as an approved range. If shooting on your own property make sure you have an adequate backstop and follow all relevant municipal or provincial laws.
- Begin at a distance of 10 metres and then work out to 20, 30 and 40 metres (yards). Fire at least 3 shots from each distance.
- Use a shooting rest to ensure greater accuracy and sight-in under windless conditions.
- Start with weight-matched field tips. Once the crossbow is on target switch to broadheads of the same weight for final sighting-in purposes.
- To adjust a pin sight, use the “follow the arrow rule”. For example, if the hits are low adjust the pin downward. If the hits are to the right, move the pin to the right.
- To adjust a scope sight, refer to the distance corrections indicated on the scope’s windage (left/right) and elevation (up/down) dials. For example, if the scope dial indicates it adjusts arrow hits 1/2 inch at 20 yards then 2 clicks will be needed to move your arrows 1 inch on the target at this distance.
- Some crossbow scopes feature a range compensating crosshair system. Scopes with this system have an arrow-speed dial that you set to match the specific crossbow model you are using. You then sight-in your crossbow at a predetermined distance, for example 20 yards. Once sighted-in at this distance your crossbow is also sighted-in at additional target distances indicated by multiple crosshairs visible through the scope. It is recommended you confirm these settings by taking a few practice shots.
- Sight systems vary from crossbow to crossbow. Always consult your owner’s manual when sighting-in your crossbow.

### CROSSBOW SAFETY

Follow these safety guidelines to reduce your risk of injury:

- Inspect your crossbow and bolts for signs of damage, loose parts, or wear each time you use them. Replace or repair worn or damaged parts.
- Make sure your foot is firmly placed in the stirrup during cocking. If it slips out, the crossbow will be pulled upwards with force possibly injuring the shooter.
- When hunting from a treestand:
  - use a full body safety harness and make sure you are attached to the tree at all times.
  - cock your crossbow on the ground and wait until after you have entered your treestand to load it with an arrow.
  - use a hoist rope to raise or lower your unloaded crossbow stock-first.
- Your safety should be on at all times once your crossbow is cocked.
- Make sure your hands and fingers are below the deck and string level when shooting your crossbow!
- Never fire your crossbow when there are obstacles that may come in contact with its limbs. Crossbow limbs move forward with considerable force when the arrow is released. If they strike an object the impact can result in significant “kickback” which will injure the shooter.
- Unload your crossbow by firing a field tipped or “decocking” bolt. Never dry fire your crossbow since this can damage it and possibly injure the shooter.
- Never leave a crossbow cocked for an extended period of time. Refer to the owner’s manual for recommended storage and uncocking methods.
- Use extreme caution when handling razor sharp broadheads. Keep broadheads covered in a quiver and use a broadhead wrench to change them.
- Be 100% sure of your target and beyond!

## Safety Tips



**MAKE SURE YOUR FOOT IS FIRMLY PLACED IN THE STIRRUP DURING COCKING.**



**KEEP YOUR FINGERS BELOW THE STRING LEVEL.**

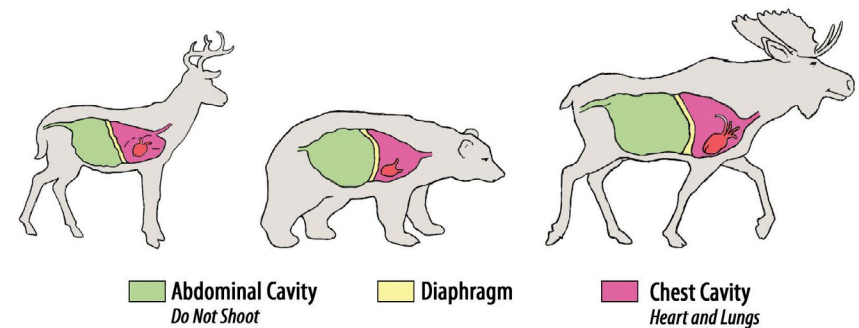


**CROSSBOW LIMBS MUST NOT CONTACT ANY OBSTACLES DURING FIRING.**

## HUNTING ETHICS

The future of hunting depends to a large degree on hunter behaviour. Use your crossbow in a safe and responsible manner to project a positive image of hunting to the public.

- Always ask for permission to hunt on private land. Do this well before the season and remember to thank the landowner.
- Retrieve your bolts after every shot. Arrows left behind may injure livestock and cause problems for farmers or landowners.
- Only take shots within your effective range - the distance at which you can consistently hit a 10 to 15 cm (4 to 6 inch) diameter target. The preferred shot distance for most crossbow hunters is 20 metres (yards). Crossbow manufacturers generally recommend 40 metres (yards) as the maximum distance for crossbow shots when hunting.
- Know when and where to shoot. Broadside or quartering away shots are the most effective. Target only an animal's vital area – the chest cavity area where the largest concentration of vital organs and blood vessels are located. Shots to this area produce a quick and humane kill.



- Practice target shooting, handling and loading your crossbow. Know its shooting capabilities and how to safely use it!

