

Questions and Answers on Transition from Valeron to Plain Paper Sporting Licenses and Tags for Customers

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Beginning with the 2024-25 hunting license year, DEC is transitioning from special license stock (Valeron) to plain paper licenses and tags. The following questions and answers provide information on how this change will impact License Issuing Agents (LIAs) and licensed hunters, trappers, and anglers. This document will be updated as we progress through this transition.

General

Q: What is the new license/tag transition and when will it occur?

A: DEC will change the type of paper used for sporting licenses and carcass tags from special license stock (Valeron) to plain paper by August 2024 when 2024-25 licenses go on sale. Lifetime licenses and tags for the 2024-25 license year will be printed on plain paper and mailed with the expectation that they will be received no later than September 1, 2024.

Q: Why is DEC changing from Valeron license stock to plain paper?

A: DEC, like other state conservation agencies around the country, has experienced difficulties acquiring Valeron stock due to supply chain issues and increased costs. Over the last few years, many states such as Ohio, Oregon, New Hampshire, and Virginia have successfully shifted to plain paper and digital licenses and tags, providing a good framework to guide our transition. DEC has also used plain paper tags for the Tompkins County Deer Management Focus Area for the past decade. Additionally, using plain paper rather than Valeron reduces the agency's carbon footprint and modernizes the way sporting licenses are fulfilled and utilized afield. This transition will allow easier and quicker access to recreational activities as hunters, trappers, and anglers will be able to print their licenses and tags at home.

Q: What kind of paper, ink, and printer will be needed to print licenses and tags?

A: Whether printing licenses and tags at a License Issuing Agent (LIA) location or at home, licenses and tags will print on standard 8½ x 11-inch paper with black ink. Licenses and tags can be printed with laser, inkjet, or solid ink printers.

Licenses and tags should be printed on separate sheets of paper and not double sided, as tags will need to be cut out to be attached to a harvested deer, bear, or turkey. Most transactions will print no more than three pages: the license/privilege page, a page of carcass tags, and a receipt page. If a transaction does not include carcass tags as with purchase of only a fishing license, the transaction should just generate a license/privilege page and a receipt page.

Hunters, Trappers, and Anglers

Q: How will hunters, trappers, and anglers get licenses and tags?

A: Hunters, trappers, and anglers will still be able to purchase their licenses online, by phone, and at an LIA location. Purchases made online will include an email receipt with a PDF copy of licenses and tags that can be printed at home. Purchases made at an LIA location may be printed by the LIA or emailed to the customer. Purchases made by phone may be printed and mailed from DEC's license vendor or emailed to the customer.

Q: Will Lifetime Hunting License holders still receive their licenses and tags in the mail?

A: Yes, lifetime license holders should receive their licenses and tags in the mail by September 1, 2024, printed on plain paper. Beginning in January 2025, lifetime license holders will be able to call 1-866-933-2257 to arrange to have their lifetime license and tags emailed to them each year rather than delivered by mail. Once signed up for email delivery, lifetime license and tags will be emailed each year, allowing the license holder to retain an electronic copy of the license and to print tags at home. Lifetime license holders will also be able to sign up for email delivery as well as gaining complete access to their online profile by creating a username and password for their DECALS account.

Q: What can hunters, trappers, and anglers show to an Environmental Conservation Police Officer (ECO) as a proof of licensure when afield?

A: Hunters and trappers will have the option of carrying a plain paper copy of their license, or an electronic copy of their license in the free [HuntFishNY](#) mobile app. In addition to the paper copy of their license and the electronic license in the [HuntFishNY](#) app, anglers can also provide an officer with their 12-digit, DEC ID number. For the 2024-25 license year, the only option for carcass tags is plain paper

Q: If the new tags are plain paper and not weather resistant, won't they get damaged when afield hunting?

A: It is the hunter's responsibility to protect their license and tags. Carcass tags must still be filled out, dated, signed, and attached to the animal as required by regulation. DEC suggests storing licenses and tags in a waterproof bag or container while hunting and placing the completed carcass tag in a zip-top bag or other reusable waterproof protector and securely fastening it to the deer, bear, or turkey to ensure the tag remains protected and legible. Tags do not have to be attached to the carcass while it is being dragged or physically carried from the field but must be attached as soon as it is taken to a home, camp, or point where transportation is available. DEC will produce videos to help show hunters how they can tag their harvest as well as protect their carcass tags and license. Once these videos are complete, they can be viewed on the [NYSDEC YouTube page](#) as well as on the [DEC website](#). For now, see the process on page 4 of this document.

Q: How will the change to plain paper carcass tags affect hunters who take their deer, bear, or turkey to a processor or taxidermist?

A: The use of plain paper carcass tags will not result in a significant change for hunters who take their deer, bear, or turkey to a processor or taxidermist. Hunters will still be required to fill out, date, sign, and attach the tag to the animal, and are also responsible for protecting the tag so it remains legible. DEC recommends placing the completed carcass tag in a zip-top bag or other reusable waterproof protector and securely fastening it to the deer, bear, or turkey to ensure the tag remains protected and legible.

Q: What should hunters, trappers, or anglers do if they lose their license or tags or if the paper gets destroyed?

A: Hunters, trappers, and anglers may obtain plain paper replacements of their licenses and tags from an in-person license sales agent, though replacement fees will apply. Alternatively, they may reprint the licenses and tags from their online account or from the PDF included in the email associated with their original license purchase. Also, hunters, trappers, and anglers may use the [HuntFishNY](#) app as an electronic copy of their license. Anglers may also provide their 12-digit DEC ID number.

Q: Are hunters still required to report their harvests?

A: Absolutely! Successful hunters are required by law to report the harvest of deer, bear, and turkey. DEC's recommends reporting via the [HuntFishNY](#) app immediately as you also fill out the tag. This report can be made even if you do not have cell service and will automatically be transmitted when you have service. [Harvest reports can also be completed online](#) or by phone (1-866-426-3778). For more information on [game harvest reporting visit the DEC website](#).

Q: Won't the option to print from home increase illegal use of tags?

A: While the vast majority of hunters, trappers, and anglers are honest and ethical, there unfortunately are a small percentage of individuals who abuse the system, regardless of the tagging process. Plain paper licenses and tags have been used successfully in states across the country without evidence of an increase in fraud. Division of Fish and Wildlife staff are working closely with the Division of Law Enforcement to ensure that the use of plain paper licenses and tags and electronic licenses are compatible with compliance and enforcement needs. As with any hunting rule or regulation, when abuses are discovered, those individuals will be charged accordingly.

Q: Why doesn't DEC allow electronic tags like some other states?

A: A recent change to New York State law allows DEC to accommodate the use of electronic carcass tags that do not require a physical tag be attached to an animal; however, this change requires

modifications to hunting regulations so electronic carcass tagging will not be available for the 2024-25 hunting seasons. More information about this change will come as DEC develops regulations necessary to implement the change. For the 2024-25 seasons, plain paper will be the only option for carcass tags.

Q. What about backtags?

A: A change to New York State law removed the requirement that hunters wear a physical backtag. Effective immediately, hunters no longer need backtags while hunting anywhere in New York State. Lifetime licenses for 2024-25 will be mailed without backtags and customers will not receive backtags beginning in August 2024 when 2024-25 licenses go on sale.

License Issuing Agents (LIAs)

Q: When will the change to printing licenses and tags on plain paper occur?

A: The change to printing licenses and tags on plain printing paper will occur by August 2024 when 2024-25 licenses go on sale. Messages will be sent to all LIAs via DEC's Automated Licensing System (DECALS) and a GovDelivery email newsletter.

Q: Will DEC supply LIAs with plain paper printers, plain paper, and ink?

A: No, DEC will not supply plain paper printers, paper, or ink. To help cover the cost of the use of agent equipment and supplies DEC has proposed a regulation change to allow License Issuing Agents to collect an additional printing fee. This fee, if approved, would be applied to the transaction carried out in DECALS when a customer opts to have their license and tags printed at the point of sale.

Q: What should LIAs do with the leftover Valeron license paper and the Valeron/Zebra printer?

A: Leftover Valeron stock should be recycled or disposed of (Valeron can be recycled by facilities that handle HDPE plastic #2). It does not need to be returned to DEC. DEC's license vendor, Gordon-Darby, will contact each LIA location to arrange for the return of the Zebra license printer and will provide a prepaid, return shipping label. LIAs should look for messages in DECALS and through GovDelivery for further direction.

Q: Will LIAs be able to sell licenses from more than one computer at their location?

A: Yes. Once the transition is made, the DECALS system will no longer look for a special license printer and will allow printing licenses and tags through the printers you have available at your sales location. This should give locations the ability to sell licenses in DECALS from more than one computer.

Q: Will there be a need to adjust any setting on a LIAs' printer?

A: All printing should be single-sided. Licenses and tags will print on separate sheets of paper because hunters must cut out a carcass tag when they harvest a deer, bear, or turkey.

Q: Will there be any special steps to take with printer installation so that it can work with DECALS?

A: No. Once the change is made to plain paper printing, printing licenses and tags to your printer should work in the same way as when you print other documents in your office.

Q: Will there be a need to maintain and return misprinted licenses and carcass tags (aka "returnable documents")?

A: No. Misprinted copies of licenses and carcass tags should be shredded and recycled/disposed of accordingly.

Q: Will there still be a fee for replacing licenses and carcass tags?

A: Yes. If someone comes to a LIA to replace their licenses and/or carcass tags outside the DEC designated free lifetime replacement period or when a free replacement is allowed, replacement fees will still apply. Replacements should be processed in a separate transaction and will still cost \$5 for licenses, privileges, and permits, while replacement for carcass tags will cost \$10. Customers can avoid replacement fees by reprinting at home from their DECALS account or from the PDF documents that

were emailed to them with their original purchase. More information on replacement fees can be found on DEC's [General Sporting License Information webpage](#).

Print and Tag



Department of Environmental Conservation

Steps for attaching your new plain paper tag to your harvest:

1. Get your paper tags from a license sales office or print them from the PDF sent to your email



2. Cut the appropriate tag from the sheet of paper



3. Upon harvesting, complete the tag with the harvest information and sign it



4. Place the tag in a weatherproof case or bag (see below for examples)



5. Attach weatherproof case or bag to the animal, keeping the tag visible



Remember: Hunters are responsible to protect their paper tag so it remains intact and legible and must attach the tag so it is visible. Tags do not need to be attached to deer or bear until arrival at home, camp, or vehicle.

Examples of weatherproof casings:



Reusable sandwich bag



Reusable plastic tag holder



ID holder



Plastic sandwich bag