

# New Pa. hunting rules would allow electronic duck decoys and Ozonics

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A waterfowl hunter calls ducks with electronic decoys mounted on poles behind him.

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The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners on Monday gave preliminary approval to a measure which would legalize the use of three popular electronic hunting devices — one of which could be extremely attractive to Lancaster County’s active waterfowling community.

The devices given preliminary approval are electronic waterfowl decoys; electronically heated scent or lure dispensers; and electronic devices that distribute ozone gas for scent-control purposes.

In Pennsylvania, all electronic devices are considered to be illegal, unless they are specifically excluded from that rule.

Currently, the list of legal electronic devices includes:

1. Electronic callers used for bobcats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and crows, and for snow geese during the spring conservation season.
2. Lighted sight pins on archery tackle, so long as the pins don't cast a beam.
3. Illuminated nocks on arrows and crossbow bolts.
4. Sound amplification devices contained in or on a hunter's ear.
5. Electronic crow decoys.
6. Guns that use an electronic impulse to fire the charge.
7. Rangefinders.

Many Pennsylvania waterfowl hunters have been clamoring for the right to use motorized decoys for years.

For the uneducated, the most common e-decoy used in waterfowling is the spinning-wing decoy. It's a duck decoy with wings that spin under battery power. They look like real ducks settling down on the water; they can be seen by ducks from a long way off; and they are very effective.

If these decoys are legalized, count on seeing them scattered up and down Lancaster County's wildly popular duck-hunting spots on the Susquehanna River, such as Washington Boro, Columbia, Bainbridge and Holtwood.

Pennsylvania has long avoided legalizing electronic waterfowl decoys, due to fears of an explosion in the state's annual duck kill.

But it's surrounded by states where those decoys have been used by hunters for years.

When there's talk about "electronic devices that distribute ozone gas for scent-control purposes," hunters are mainly talking about Ozonics. That's the best-known device on the market.

The theory behind it is that the device generates ozone, which then mixes in the air stream with a hunter's scent and effectively kills that scent, allowing the hunter to beat a deer's nose.

There never has been a controversy over the use of Ozonics in Pennsylvania. It has just never come up before for consideration by the Game Commission to be added to the list of legal devices.

Same goes for electronic scent dispensers, which would primarily be used by deer hunters using odors to try to lure deer to their hunting positions. They already can do that with products that are dispensed manually or by aerosol spray.

By giving all these devices preliminary approval last week, the Game Commission has opened the door for public comment on the measure. A second favorable vote in September would be required to make these devices legal for the 2017-18 hunting season.Â



**Pennsylvania Game Commission approves use of 4 electronic devices for waterfowl, dove and deer hunting**