

Area Bloggers



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Conservation Notes w/Mark Reed - Feral Hogs

MAY 30TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

Conservation Notes w/Mark Reed - Feral Hogs

*Submitted by
Mark Reed*

Stoddard County Conservation Agent

Stoddard County, Missouri - Feral hogs have been in the news quite often the last few years. In early April, a landowner near Bell City reported hogs damaging his pasture and wildlife food plots. Other folks in the area reported seeing a group of hogs several times. The Department of Conservation has staff to assist landowners with hog problems and we were working with this landowner when a motorist may have taken care of the problem.

One morning a young man reported hitting several hogs with his truck. I went for a look and sure enough found 8 dead feral hogs. I have not received any more reports so hopefully there are no more hogs in that area. Over the past few years' feral hogs have been killed in several locations around Stoddard County and counties to the west. Biologists believe there is a population of feral hogs living on Mingo National Wildlife Area and Duck Creek Conservation Area. Staff recently deployed a helicopter to that area in hopes of eliminating several hogs. Only one boar was found and dispatched but evidence of other hogs was present.

Missourians Should Be Concerned

First of all, feral hogs are extremely destructive animals and will eat and destroy wild turkey nests and eggs, fawn whitetail deer, any ground nesting bird or animal, wildlife food plots, agricultural crops, gardens, pastures, hay fields, and pretty much anything else they find including wild foods needed by deer and turkey. Secondly, these hogs are not native animals and are being brought here and released by folks hoping to establish populations.

Some people enjoy hunting feral hogs but most sportsmen are not willing to sacrifice our native wildlife. The economic expense hogs bring with them is hard to estimate, but in addition to their destructive ways, feral hogs may carry any of 32 diseases. Some of these diseases can be transmitted to wildlife and domestic livestock. In addition, swine brucellosis can infect people through handling of feral hog carcasses.

It does not take many hogs to establish a population. Feral hogs can reproduce before they reach one year of age and may have two to three litters each year. Litter size can range from six to eight piglets. Research in southern states indicates that to control a hog population, approximately seventy percent of the hogs must be destroyed annually. Remember, seventy percent harvest will only keep a hog population in check.

Feral hogs are not wildlife in Missouri but some hunting regulations do apply if you are in the field pursuing hogs. Feral hogs may not be released on public land or on private land that is not adequately fenced to contain them. Each hog released represents a separate offense and the release of several hogs can result in felony charges with fines of up to \$5000 and an additional \$1000 per hog administrative penalty through the Department of Agriculture.

We do not want hogs in Missouri and the Department of Conservation is working towards eradicating this threat to our natural resources and agricultural crops. If you know of someone releasing feral hogs, please call the **Operation Game Thief Hotline at 1-800-392-1111**.

If you have questions regarding this or other conservation topics, give me a call at **573-421-3240**. The Department of Conservation no longer directs hunters to suspected populations of feral hogs. If we locate hogs we will try to destroy them as quickly as possible before they move to a new area.

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Conservation Notes With Mark Reed

MAY 22ND 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

Conservation Notes With Mark Reed

*Submitted by
Mark Reed*

Stoddard County Conservation Agent

Dexter, Missouri - The 2013 spring turkey season is in the books here in Missouri. Statewide hunters harvested 42,220 turkeys, which is an increase of 1,773 from 2012. Stoddard County turkey hunters bagged a total of 304 birds in 2013 compared to 302 last year. The county total includes turkeys harvested during the two day youth seasons. Statewide the Missouri turkey population is strong and surveys show our bird numbers are doing well on the heels of a couple good hatches.

Crappie fishing has been spotty. Weather fronts can make crappie fishing unpredictable as water temperatures fluctuate. Crappie tend to become more active and spawning behavior begins once water temperatures reach the mid 50's.

Otter Slough anglers have had more consistent success while crappie fishermen at other area lakes report tougher conditions. Anglers should note that the crappie length limit has been eliminated on Otter Slough. All other Otter Slough fishing regulations remain the same and length limits on other area lakes are still in place.

Before a crappie length limit is put in place, biologists must determine the rate of growth on a given lake. Crappie must reach the proposed size within four years or a length limit will not be established. Otter Slough crappie were hitting nine inches in their third year which is excellent growth, however, not many lived long enough to reach that size. Crappie harvest on Otter Slough is so heavy that before the length limit few fish lived long enough to reach quality size. The first couple years the length limit was in place, anglers were able to harvest larger fish, however, crappie have become stunted and very few fish now reach the nine inch length limit.

Biologists believe competition is too great in the lake and too many small crappie are now present. Crappie growth rates will not improve until some are harvested. Hopefully we will see some larger fish within a year or two.

Our cool, wet spring has been a boon to morel hunters. Mushrooms need a little moisture followed by sunny days with night temperatures above 50 degrees. Many folks report this spring as the best mushroom year they can remember. Mushrooms can be harvested on most Department of Conservation areas but remember to ask before entering private land. Trespassing is a crime regardless of why you enter private property. Also remember that private land does not have to be posted in order for a person to be charged with trespass.

If you are not certain of how to identify morels, the Missouri Department of Conservation has an excellent publication, which can help you identify several types of edible mushrooms found in Missouri. To receive a copy of the publication, contact any Missouri Department of Conservation office.

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Durable Medical Equipment and Supplies

MAY 20TH 2013 BY STAFF WRITER

Durable Medical Equipment and Supplies

*Submitted by
Ruth Dockins*

Durable medical equipment and supplies are things such as oxygen, walkers, or wheelchairs and other similar items.

There is a program through Medicare called the Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, (DEMEPOS) program. The first round of the program went into effect in nine areas of the country on January 1, 2011, reducing money spent for equipment included in the program by over 42 percent in its first year of operation while maintaining access to quality equipment and supplies.

Now the program's benefits are coming to people with Original Medicare near you, and there is some important information you need to know. **Round 2 of the program is scheduled to begin on July 1, 2013, and expands it to 91 additional areas across the country.** These areas can be found in the fact sheet at <http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/Partnerships/Downloads/DMEPOSFactSheetMarch2013.pdf>. The area nearest to the 18 counties of SEMO AAA's service area is St. Louis, MO.

When the program starts, people with Original Medicare who live in or travel to one of these areas and need the items listed below will likely need to get these items from contract suppliers if they want Medicare to help pay, unless their current suppliers decide to become grandfathered suppliers (non-contract suppliers that choose to continue to provide certain rented medical equipment or oxygen under the terms of the program).

So people will need to find out which suppliers are Medicare contract suppliers to make sure Medicare can help pay for their medical equipment or supplies. You can find out if a supplier is a contract supplier for the program by visiting <http://www.medicare.gov/supplierdirectory/search.html> or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

The 8 product categories that are included in Round 2 of the program are:

1. Oxygen, oxygen equipment, and supplies;
2. Standard (power and manual) wheelchairs, scooters, and related accessories;
3. Enteral nutrients, equipment, and supplies;
4. Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) devices, Respiratory Assist Devices (RADs) and related supplies and accessories;
5. Hospital beds and related accessories;
6. Walkers and related accessories;
7. Support surfaces (Group 2 mattresses and overlays); and
8. Negative Pressure Wound Therapy pumps and related supplies and accessories.

In addition to the categories of items listed, **Medicare will be starting a national mail-order program for diabetic testing supplies** at the same time as Round 2. The national mail-order program will include all parts of the United States, including the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

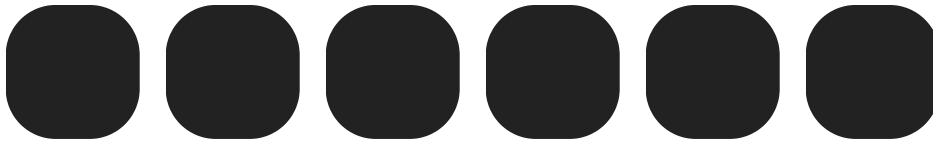
When the national mail-order program starts, people with Original Medicare will need to use a contract supplier for diabetic testing supplies delivered to their homes. This means even if you purchase your diabetic supplies from a local drug store ***if they mail it to you they must be a contracted supplier*** but if you go to the drug store and pick up the supplies they do not have to be a contracted supplier at this time.

Starting May 13, 2013, Medicare is mailing information to those who use diabetic testing supplies across the country. Please call me if you have questions at 1-800-392-8771 or locally at 573-335-3331.

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PR Medicare Reward Program

APRIL 26TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

PR Medicare Reward Program

*Submitted by
Ruth Dockins*

PR Medicare Reward Program and Provider Enrollment

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced a proposed rule that would increase rewards paid to Medicare beneficiaries and others whose tips about suspected fraud lead to the successful recovery of funds to as high as \$9.9 million. In addition, a new funding opportunity released this month supports the expansion of Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) activities to educate Medicare beneficiaries on how to prevent, detect and report Medicare fraud, waste and abuse.

“President Obama has made the elimination of fraud, waste and abuse, particularly in health care, a top priority for the administration,” said Secretary Sebelius. “Today’s announcement is a signal to Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers, who are on the frontlines of this fight, that they are critical partners in helping protect taxpayer dollars.”

Over the last three years, the administration has recovered over \$14.9 billion in fraud, some of which resulted from fraud reporting by individuals – a proven tool in helping the government detect fraud, waste and abuse in the Medicare program. Under the proposed changes, a person that provides specific information leading to the recovery of funds may be eligible to receive a reward of 15 percent of the amount recovered, up to nearly \$10 million. HHS currently offers a reward of 10 percent up to \$1,000 under the current incentive reward program. The changes are modeled on an IRS program that has returned \$2 billion in fraud since 2003.

The proposed rule would also strengthen certain provider enrollment provisions including allowing HHS to deny enrollment of providers who are affiliated with an entity that has unpaid Medicare debt, deny or revoke billing privileges for individuals with felony convictions, and revoke privileges for providers and suppliers who are abusing their billing privileges.

The SMP is a national, volunteer-based program that empowers Medicare beneficiaries to prevent and report Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse. Since 1997, more than 3.5 million beneficiaries have learned how to recognize and fight fraud and abuse, and more than 7,000 referrals have been made to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Office of the Inspector General for investigation.

To expand the SMP program’s capacity to reach more Medicare beneficiaries, the Administration for Community Living issued a new funding opportunity. Each of the current 54 SMP projects is eligible for varying funding levels, up to a total of \$7.3 million across the program.

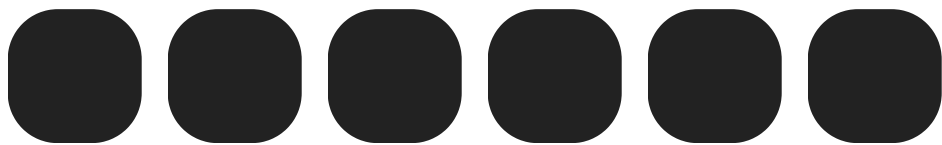
These proposed changes will support the administration’s comprehensive approach to program integrity, including the work being done with the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team, a joint effort between HHS and the Department of Justice to fight health care fraud. This joint effort recovered a record \$4.2 billion in taxpayer dollars in fiscal year 2012.

To read a fact sheet about today’s proposed rule visit: http://www.cms.gov/apps/media/fact_sheets.asp

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What is an Opt-Out Doctor?

APRIL 16TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

What is an Opt-Out Doctor?

Written by

Ruth Dockins

What is an Opt-Out Doctor?

We have been hearing from a few seniors who are concerned that their doctors may soon no longer accept Medicare because of the changes happening in the law. I thought the

following article might offer some information in which you might be interested.

This information is republished with permission from the Medicare Rights Center for more information visit www.medicarerights.org.

An **opt-out doctor** is a doctor who does not accept **Medicare** at all. Doctors who have opted out of Medicare can charge their Medicare patients whatever they want. These doctors don't submit any health care **claims** to Medicare. In addition, opt-out doctors are not subject to the Medicare laws that limit the amount that doctors can charge their patients. When you see a doctor who has opted out of Medicare, you pay the entire cost of your care, unless it's an emergency or you need urgent care. Generally, Medicare does not pay for health care services you receive from an opt-out doctor.

If your doctor has officially opted out of Medicare, your doctor must have you sign a private contract that states that you agree to receive care from a doctor who has opted out of Medicare. If you sign this contract, you are responsible for the full cost of health care services you receive from the opt-out doctor. Keep in mind that doctors who have opted out of Medicare can charge you as much as they want. In addition, you cannot get **Medicare reimbursement** for health care services received from an opt-out doctor.

If your doctor has opted out of Medicare and does not ask you to sign a private contract before providing you with Medicare-covered health care services, you will not have to pay anything for health care services you received. Your doctor must refund you any money you've already paid for those services.

</images/Opt Out Medicare.gif>

If you have **Original Medicare**, the traditional Medicare program offered directly through the federal government, you will **pay** the least for doctor's services if you see a doctor who accepts Medicare and **takes assignment**. A doctor who takes assignment accepts Medicare's approved amount as full payment for health care services. Contact your doctor's office to make sure that your doctor accepts Medicare and takes assignment. You can also call 800-MEDICARE or visit www.medicare.gov to find doctors who accept Medicare and take assignment.

If you have a **Medicare Advantage plan**, also known as a Medicare private health plan, you should see doctors within your plan's **network**. You typically pay the least if you go to a doctor that is in the plan's network. Check with your plan to see what rules apply.

For more free useful information about Medicare go to www.medicareinteractive.org.

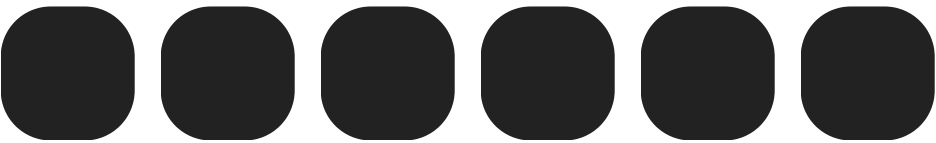
On a completely different matter:

The Annual Law Enforcement Memorial to honor local Law Enforcement officers fallen in the line of duty will be held at the Cape Bible Chapel, 2911 Kage Rd. in Cape Girardeau on May 10 at 10:00 a.m. All are welcome, please come and show your support for our officers who place their lives on the line every day to keep us safe.

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