



# New Mexico Elk Application Guide

*Nonresident Step-by-Step Application Walkthrough — Random Draw — No Points | 6% Nonresident Pool*

This guide covers everything a nonresident archery elk hunter needs to apply in New Mexico. Verify all deadlines and fees at the official state agency website before applying.

## HUNTER INFORMATION

Your Name	_____	State Account / Username	_____
Application Year	_____	Points Currently Held	_____
Preferred Unit / Region	_____	Backup Unit / Region	_____

## KEY DATES

MILESTONE	TYPICAL WINDOW	YOUR DATE	NOTES
Application Opens	Mid-January 2026		Set calendar reminder now
Application Deadline	March 18, 2026 at 5:00 PM MT		DO NOT miss this deadline
Draw Results	Late April 2026		Check email and state portal
License / Payment Due	After draw results		Pay promptly or forfeit tag
Archery Season Opens	Early–Mid September		Confirm year-specific dates

## POINT SYSTEM — PURE RANDOM DRAW — NO POINT SYSTEM

New Mexico is a PURE RANDOM DRAW — no preference or bonus points. Every applicant has equal odds each year, regardless of previous applications. This makes New Mexico one of the most accessible states for first-time applicants. You could draw a world-class Gila elk tag in your first year of applying. NONRESIDENT QUOTA: Only 6% of tags go to nonresidents in the regular draw. Up to 10% of tags are allocated to the GUIDE DRAW — if you apply with a licensed outfitter, your odds improve significantly. Guides must have a signed contract with you before you apply. IMPORTANT: New Mexico charges your full tag cost when you APPLY — not when you draw. Unsuccessful applicants receive a refund of the tag cost (minus small fees). Keep your credit card valid through draw results in late April. Harvest reporting is MANDATORY every year even if you did not hunt. Failure to report can make you ineligible to apply.

*Strategy tip: List all three unit choices strategically — New Mexico processes 1st, 2nd, then 3rd choice for each applicant before moving to the next. Use all three choices. Apply with a licensed outfitter through the guide draw pool for significantly better odds on premium units. Apply solo for the regular draw if going DIY. Complete harvest reporting every year without fail — missing it disqualifies you.*

## COST SUMMARY



ITEM	COST (APPROX.)	PAID?	DATE PAID
Hunting License	~\$65 (nonresident hunting license)		
Elk Tag / Permit	Charged at application — refunded minus fees if unsuccessful		
Application Fee	Non-refundable application fee per species (varies)		
Archery Permit (if required)	Varies by state		
Conservation / Habitat Stamp	Varies by state		
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED</b>	~\$500–\$800+ (varies by unit and weapon type)		

### APPLICATION STEP-BY-STEP

#### Step 1: Purchase Required License

Buy a nonresident hunting license (~\$65) at [onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us](https://onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us). Required to apply.

#### Step 2: Log In and Access the Draw

Go to [onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us](https://onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us) and log in or create your account. Navigate to Big Game Draw applications.

#### Step 3: Choose Application Pool

Decide: Regular Draw (DIY nonresident — 6% pool) or Guide Draw (with licensed outfitter — 10% pool). You must have a signed outfitter contract BEFORE applying for the guide draw.

#### Step 4: Select Species and Enter Choices

Select elk. Enter up to THREE unit choices — New Mexico processes all three per applicant before moving to the next person. Use all three. 1st: \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd: \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 5: Pay Full Tag Cost at Application

IMPORTANT: New Mexico charges your card for the full tag cost at application — not when you draw. Make sure your payment method is valid through late April when results post.

#### Step 6: Submit and Confirm

Submit by March 18, 2026 at 5:00 PM MT. Screenshot or print your confirmation immediately.

#### Step 7: Complete Harvest Reporting

After the season — whether or not you hunted — COMPLETE YOUR HARVEST REPORT. Missing it makes you ineligible to apply the following year.

### UNIT RESEARCH NOTES

Top trophy units: Gila (units 15, 16A–E) and Sacramento Mountains (units 34–37) produce some of the largest bulls in the country. These are the most sought-after and most difficult units for nonresidents. More accessible options: units 17, 18, 19, 20 (south-central NM) — higher tag numbers, longer seasons, more opportunity. Note: Early 2026 has been dry in NM — drought may



impact antler growth and elk movement. Verify current herd conditions with NMDGF before applying.

UNIT / REGION	PUBLIC LAND	TROPHY POTENTIAL	TERRAIN	MY NOTES
Gila (15/16A-E)	Moderate	Trophy	SW mountains / forest	World-class bulls; low NR odds
Sacramento (34-37)	Moderate-High	Trophy	SE mountains	Strong trophy potential
Unit 17/18/19	Moderate	Moderate-Good	South-central NM	Higher tags, more access
Unit 20A/20C	Moderate	Good-Trophy	Mixed terrain	Complex access; outfitter helpful
Unit 2 (North)	High	Moderate	Northern NM mountains	Consider for higher NR odds

### SEASON DATES (CONFIRM ANNUALLY)

Archery season: Typically early September through late September (rut overlap). Rifle and muzzleloader seasons vary by unit — typically October and November. New Mexico has both early archery bull hunts and late archery bull hunts. Cow hunts available across multiple seasons. Confirm exact dates at [onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us](https://onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us).

### STRATEGY NOTES & REMINDERS

New Mexico's random draw is both its biggest challenge and its best opportunity. Anyone can draw a monster Gila tag their first year — but most don't. Apply every year with thoughtful unit choices. Use all three choices wisely. Consider the guide draw if you are serious about premium units — outfitter pools often provide meaningfully better odds on top-end hunts. Set a calendar reminder for harvest reporting after every season — missing it disqualifies you the following year. Apply at [onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us](https://onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us).

### MY NOTES

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Always verify current regulations at the official state agency website. Use GoHunt and OnX Hunt for research. More at [huntinggrowth.com](https://huntinggrowth.com)