

Hunters limited in places to buy guns

By Joey Falkoff

Colby Free Press
jfalkoff@nwkansas.com

Northwest Kansas hunters will be a bit more limited this hunting season in the number of places they can go to buy guns and other accessories.

Colby's Wal-Mart still has a large selection of hunting accessories like jackets, archery supplies and ammunition, and sells hunting licenses as well, but no guns.

The store decided to stop carrying firearms in March. While most people think it was a decision based on morality, Wal-Mart associate Larry Jones said it was mostly financial.

"We discontinued our guns because we don't take trade-ins," said Jones. "A gun is a lifetime investment, so because we don't take trade-ins, we can't carry as many guns in stock as we would like. It was just easier for us to not sell guns at all."

Licenses are now the biggest draw at Wal-Mart for hunters, he said, adding:

"We get people coming in from all over the country who come and hunt with their families and buy hunting licenses here."

Pirates Den Sporting Goods of Colby still sells concealed-carry weapons, but gave up on selling hunting rifles and most hunting accessories two years ago. The availability of rifles, gear and licenses online made it unprofitable for Pirates

Den to continue to have hunting supplies in stock, the owner said.

"With hunting licenses and ammunition being sold on the Internet now, it made it to where it wasn't going to pay for itself to continue to sell those things," said Kent Barrett. "At one time, I had the most extensive collection of archery supplies, but it just didn't make sense to carry a lot of that stuff."

"Hunting is a lot of fun. We don't oppose it. It just hasn't been busy enough to support it."

Barrett said he also has noticed more and more people in the area driving to Nebraska or Kansas City to buy their guns and supplies.

"I know a lot of people who go to Cabelas in (Nebraska) or Kansas City to buy their hunting rifles instead of buying locally," said Barrett. "I think some people just think because they have to drive farther to get something, it will work better or it will give them an advantage."

C & M Gun and Pawn of Colby doesn't yet sell hunting licenses, but now has the biggest stock of guns of any place in town. C & M carries everything from .22 caliber pistols to big-bore rifles to trap and skeet guns.

"We cater to more everyday farmers and working people," said co-owner Mike Shubert. "We stress having good quality, but try to make our guns affordable for the average person."

Gun prices at C & M range anywhere from \$200 to \$2,000, he said. A couple of Shubert's

favorites guns are the Ruger No. 1 Model, which he says has done real well over the last few years and is a good value investment gun, and the Henry Rifle Co. .22 caliber lever.

For youth hunters, Shubert has a variety of 20-gauge shotguns, which he says start at well under \$300.

Shubert says he hasn't noticed any of his customers going out of town to buy their weapons. He said he thinks people enjoy the hands-on approach that C & M tries to provide its customers.

"The biggest difference between here and a place like Cabelas is at our store you can buy guns from people who have a lifetime of experience with them," said Shubert. "We work hard for our customers and want to make sure they're happy. We don't just print off a receipt and send you on your way."

"Mike will go out and take the time to make sure a customer's gun is shooting right," said his wife and co-owner, Cindy Shubert. "If a rifle isn't working right, Mike will go out with them and help fix the problem."

C & M can also order guns if they don't have a particular one in stock.

The End Zone sporting goods store in Norton sells hunting apparel, ammunition, archery supplies and licenses among other things.

"We have about 25 different firearms on hand, a few hand guns and ammunition for just about

anything," said End Zone archery manager Ryan Manning. "We sell more midrange stuff for the budget-oriented hunter, and the closer we get to hunting season, we try to have more things in stock."

Manning also feels that his store has more to offer than the bigger chain stores or buying online.

"If someone needs to come in and get extra help, you can do that here," said Manning. "We're as competitive in prices as any of the bigger box stores. Our selection is pretty good, and we have the best customer service. It's just a lot more personal here than a bigger store."

Dale's Fish 'N' Fun of Oberlin also has all the hunting gear available for the most avid of hunters.

"We carry a lot of different accessories and we have new stuff coming in all of the time," said vice president Joe Dejmaj. "We're the only place in Decatur County to sell electronic (hunting and fishing) licenses."

Because of its remote location in the far northwest corner of the state, he said, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun is able to serve a wide range of people.

"We're more wholesale than retail," said Dejmaj. "We service a lot of people in Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska. People come here from all over the country to hunt and fish, so they'll stop here and buy their licenses."

**Double K Meats
printed Sep to
Gdn**

**Ebke Liquor
printed sep to gdn**

Norton Travel & Tourism DiscoverNorton.com
104 South State — PO Box 132 — Norton, KS 67654 — Phone 785-877-2501

Where the Best Come to Stay!

WELCOME TO NORTON
STATE PARK AND SEBELIUS RESERVOIR —
Camping, Fishing and Wildlife
GALLERY OF ALSO RANS —
Unsuccessful Candidates for Presidency of the United States
STATION 15 —
Leavenworth to Pikes Peak Stagecoach Stop
www.us36.net/nortonkansas
"WHERE THE BEST COME TO STAY"

