

# Hunting From a Landowners Perspective

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## SPEAKERS

Speaker 3, Christa Hartsook, Kevin Andersen, Olivia Hanlon

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### Christa Hartsook 00:15

Hello, and welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Our podcast covers the opportunities and challenges associated with rural life.

### Olivia Hanlon 00:29

In this episode I visit with Kevin Anderson, Private Lands Biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources about hunting from a landowners perspective. I'm Olivia Hanlon, ISU Small Farms Education Extension Specialist and we hope you enjoy the show. Kevin, welcome to the show. We're glad to have you joining us today.

### Kevin Andersen 00:46

Yeah, I'm excited to be here. I was with you guys a year ago. And it's really cool to be back, Olivia.

### Olivia Hanlon 00:52

Absolutely. So like you said, Kevin, you joined us last year, but for those of our listeners who may have missed that, could you remind us kind of what you do in your role for the Iowa DNR?

### Kevin Andersen 01:02

Yeah, I'm a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist. I cover 24 counties down here in greater southeast Iowa, along the Mississippi River, along the Missouri border, and all the way up to Story county now, Olivia, which is really cool.

**O** Olivia Hanlon 01:14  
You've got a wide spread there, Kevin.

**K** Kevin Andersen 01:18  
I do. I do. It's a big area, and landowners will always say, Oh, my goodness, how do you cover an area like that? And I always just kind of giggle and laugh and say, one landowner and one county at a time, right? You just do what you can. I guess my role down here, I'm partnered up with a lot of conservation partners like the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, Pheasants Forever Turkey Federation. I guess one of my main goals is to get out and meet with farmers and landowners, private landowners, that are interested in making better wildlife habitat on their land. And my duties vary from day to day, you know, writing wildlife plans, doing plant identification. This is interesting, Olivia, on Wednesday, I was doing a Indiana bat and northern long eared bat training for NRCS staff.

**O** Olivia Hanlon 02:06  
That sounds like a lot of fun, Kevin.

**K** Kevin Andersen 02:08  
Yeah, it was really neat. It was a little bit cold and windy and kind of damp. But we had almost 40, I would say newer NRCS staff, younger folks out and it's fun. It's a very diverse job. It's not the same any day and I've enjoyed it. I've done it for 22 years. I really enjoyed it.

**O** Olivia Hanlon 02:27  
Absolutely a job that's different day to day is what keeps us loving our job, right, Kevin?  
Absolutely. Alright, so like I said, today we're talking hunting from a landowner perspective, rather than from a hunter perspective. So let's start out with why it can be beneficial to let someone hurt your land if you're not a hunter yourself.

**K** Kevin Andersen 02:45  
Right, right. I think one of the biggest things why that would be beneficial, whether you're a resident and you live right there on the farm, or you're a non resident, and maybe you have a farm in southern Iowa and live in the Des Moines area or the Quad Cities, one of the things I always think about and landowners asked me this question, should I let someone hunt, is it a good thing? I always tell them, yeah, the presence of having someone on the land to kind of look around and make sure you know, things are going well. And another thing I get a lot of questions down here in what I will call it "deer rich" southeast Iowa, as landowners are always saying, "Should I let someone deer hunt? Should I let someone come out and harvest some deer?" And I'm always like, yeah, I mean, that's responsible, that's a really good thing,

especially if you have neighbors that are farmers and trying to raise agricultural crops, always good to harvest those and bucks for that matter. I think it's good too, to have someone on the land, they may spot things like invasive species, weeds, if they're, you know, wanting to hunt your CRP, maybe they find a spot where there's some erosion, or they find some shrubs and trees that shouldn't be there. So I always kind of like to think its eyes on the ground and as long as they're respectful, and, you know, the landowner says, "Hey, don't use this gate, or I've got livestock back there. Please don't go back in that part of the farm," I think it's a win win. As long as hunters are respectful, and they do what the landowner wishes, I think it's good.


**O** Olivia Hanlon 04:13

Absolutely. Kevin, we had Adam Janky on last week, and he was telling us all about how good it was to have people come on and help control the population. So it's good to hear things from your perspective as well and add a couple other reasons that it could be beneficial for the landowner. So moving on, how does a perspective landowner find hunters if they don't know someone who's interested in accessing or hunting on their land?


**K** Kevin Andersen 04:35

Yeah, when I read the question, I was like, "Oh, that that's pretty awesome," and I actually took down some notes and I and I thought my way through it, honestly, because, you know, you start talking and sometimes you're like, I'm gonna get off track on this one, but it used to be very easy. I grew up over in Carroll County, West Central Iowa. And you know, we used to just go over to the neighbor and say, "Hey, do you care if we hunt rabbits or pheasant or, you know, squirrels in your woodland?" And they'd be like, "Sure, just close the gate behind you or whatever." I think it's different nowadays, it's not as easy to, you know, find that farmer that's willing to let you go out on the land maybe because you're next to an urban area like Cedar Rapids, Davenport, or Des Moines, and they just don't know who you are. So if if a landowner says, "Hey, I'd like to have someone come out and harvest some deer on my land," or "I just like that presence out there," I think it's neat to have those people come out. Kind of referring to my notes, it sounds kind of wonky, but I've actually had farmers say, "I ran into somebody at church on Sunday," or, "Hey, I was in Casey's," and you'll get this, you know, I travel a lot my in job and you walk into the Casey's store, there's always four or five farmers drinking a cup of joe in the morning. And it's interesting, I usually go in and grab a cup of coffee, too. But it's not that I'm eavesdropping, but you hear what they talk about. You know, this, and this and this, or the football game the night before, or whatever. But I think that's an avenue, you know, you might walk into a Casey's, and you don't know those farmers and just walk up and say, "you know, of anybody locally that would let me hunt on their land. I'm very respectful." You know, one thing I always tell people do is, if you're the hunter, you have a, even a business card or something that identifies you, that's a really cool thing. Mutual friends, maybe the landowner, the farmer, the person that owns the land, doesn't know anyone that hunts but maybe they have a friend of a friend of a friend that knows someone that's very respectful and likes to hunt, and they would come out and do that. I don't know about this, but I jotted it down social media, you know, that's a big thing for the younger crowd. I'm not really actively involved in social media, because, you know, I'm so busy with work and just my hobbies and stuff like that. I do delve into it once in a while. And I know it's bigger for the for the younger folks. But maybe the landowner has a younger person in their family, or someone that says, hey, I can reach out on social media and maybe help you find someone that, you know, may want to do that. Another


thing family, you know, like I said, it may be a younger person in the family that can say, you got a kid in school, and their dad may want to come out and harvest a deer. So that's always something just relying on family. And the last note, I took Olivia was Conservation Officers, you know, local game orders. They may know, if you're a farmer, a landowner, they may know some very good hunters in the area that might want to come out and help that farmer out with some deer or something like that. We didn't really talk about trapping. But that's another thing. It's kind of a type of hunting, where you have maybe too many raccoons and your timber and they're doing some damage on some crops. Or maybe you have some coyotes that you'd like trapped. I mean, that's, that's another thing. It's a type of hunting. So there's, there's always those different avenues.

 Olivia Hanlon 08:04

Yeah, for sure. So then, once you found someone who's looking to hunt your ground, is there a formal lease that should be set in place? Is payment always utilized? Is it more likely to just be a verbal agreement? How does that look?

 Kevin Andersen 08:19

Yeah, and and that's a really good question, Olivia. I've worked with, you know, like I said, tons of landowners over 24 counties, and a lot of them will say, friends and family hunt here, you know, recreate on the land. And some will say, I've got a gentleman that comes in, in fact, I met with a gentleman from Florida last week, in one of my counties. He grew up in Iowa, but him and his wife have retired and moved to the Sunshine State good for them, right?


 Olivia Hanlon 08:45

Why not? Right?

 Kevin Andersen 08:46

Yeah, right. Why not? You look outside today. And you go Florida doesn't look bad today. But it was kind of cool, because he said he ran into a gentleman that was originally from down south as well. But he loved to come to Iowa and hunt and actually moved to Iowa. And he reached out to him and said, I would really like to hunt your land. And the gentleman that I was working with it was actually on his Conservation Reserve Program land and said, no, I don't want anyone to hunt and he said the guy kept very respectfully reaching out to him occasionally, not pestering him, but he said, Well, I would be willing to help on your land, got timber, I wouldn't be willing to cut trees if you needed that or help you out with burning or maintaining your CRP. And I think finally, the landowner from Florida basically said, oh, wait a minute, this could be a good thing. So there's no money exchanged between them. It was just a, oh, you're going to help me out on the farm. Okay. And the landowner set parameters, which I thought was very cool, set the sideboards up and said, You and one or two other friends or family and please keep it at that. And please let me know what you harvest and be respectful. So it doesn't always have to be a lease a formal lease. It doesn't always have to involve money changing hands, although I know people and do work with a few down here in southeast Iowa that do


lease, and there is money that exchanges. So I think there's avenues for that out there like farm managers, and I know here in Fairfield where I live last year, I think Extension may have done a workshop on that. Yeah. So that's always something if that farmer is looking, if they really don't know that landowner doesn't know, how do I get into leasing? How do I do that? I think those opportunities might be out there.

 Olivia Hanlon 10:34

Absolutely. And I know from Iowa State's side, we have a Center for Ag in Law and Taxation that covers a lot of leasing things, whether it be leasing farmland and things like that. So they're definitely a helpful resource on that end.

 Kevin Andersen 10:46

Right. Right.


 Olivia Hanlon 10:46

So Kevin, I know you said you don't work a lot with it. But would you say there's like a normal rate for a hunting lease? Obviously, things vary by county, and I'm sure you see a wide spread of things with your large group of counties, but if you had to guess, could you kind of tell us what that looks like to?


 Kevin Andersen 11:01

Yeah, a few years back, and it's probably more than a few years back, Olivia, you know how time flies? I remember I had a landowner reach out to me, it was almost the same question verbatim. Hey, what should a normal rate be for a hunting lease? I'm thinking about leasing. Actually, it was like a business. And they had let the public hunt the land for a long time. And they were looking into liabilities and things like that. And I told him, I said, "Well, I have a friend that does some outfitting and they lease some land from farmers and stuff. And it was basically whitetail deer." And I said, I can check in with him, and this has been, I want to say five, six, seven years ago, and he said, if you're leasing and these are just generalities, if you're leasing land for whitetail deer, and it's unimproved land, which would mean it's just crop land, and maybe CRP and some timber brushing, maybe \$10 an acre if there's no improvements, if on the upper end of it, and this was a while ago, he said the upper end of it would be if a farmer or landowner had managed their woodlands with timber stand improvement, or brush management or edge feathering along the edge and really ramped up that wildlife management, that attractability I would say, wildlife, and maybe they've put in food plots for those deer and maybe left some standing grain. He was talking about upwards of \$30 an acre, but those could vary, you know. And it could be you have a landowner that's got a wetland or a marsh and you want a hunt waterfowl. You know, we always think deer, because that's kind of what Iowa's kind of known for. You know the big bucks and all this and that, but I know landowners that do lease out wetlands for guys, and it may be your CRP, which is I looked it up and it is legal to lease out your CRP, it's totally legal to have people go out there and hunt and


pay for it. Maybe someone wants people to come out and hunt pheasant and quail. So I think it could kind of run the gamut. But once again, I would think it would be negotiable between that landowner and that possible person that wanted to lease the land.

 Olivia Hanlon 13:06

For sure. So when you're looking at leasing, are you looking for one person to do each season? Are you leasing it out by the year? How does that normally go? Do you know?

 Kevin Andersen 13:15

Yeah, going back to that same person that I knew was an outfitter, and I knew he kind of knew that system, and I was just trying to transfer that knowledge from him over to another landowner. I think he basically said you can do most people, most farmers, landowners, the the template was, most of them did it kind of like a three year lease, someone do year to year to year. But he said if you're the person trying to lease hunting land, you want to do it for more than one year. Because, you know, it really wouldn't make sense. If you said, I'd like to do the food plots. I'd like to do some of the work. And you did all that. And then the next year, the landowner says, Oh, I found someone else and you're like, oh, yeah, I did all that work on it. But he said most of them are standard three year leases, kind of like ag and maybe they based it off that Olivia, I don't know. Yeah, we've got our dove season opens on, you know, September 1 in Iowa. I don't know of anyone that leases their land and dove hunters. But let's say you're doing a lease for deer hunting on that land. And one year, the VC said to the landowner, hey, I'd like to do some, you know, some plots for doves or whatever, you know, could I lease the land from September 1 through the end of turkey season in May, for example, you know, or you could just say I'd like to lease it for the entire year. So I could go in and do the work the food plots, you know, I may be needing to manipulate food plots during the summer, spring, summer, early fall. I would imagine you would do it on a year to year basis for the whole year.

 Olivia Hanlon 14:56

Yeah. So that alone we're looking at that way kind of things should be spelled out in the lease. We've kind of mentioned that people set parameters, what kind of things should people look at when they're looking at setting up those ground rules?

 Kevin Andersen 15:08

Yeah, I would think you would spell that out. And like I said, I don't deal with a lot of this. So it's, you know, it's something that I, if I was really interested in that I would look at all the resources, you know, even legal advice from, you know, if you have a family lawyer or anything like that, or if you know, of another landowner, there's done leasing, and hey, could you show me a standard lease, but I would think you'd want the dates in there. I would think you would want Oh, is it May 1, then April 30th of the next year, I would think you'd want that rate spelled out, you know, this is the annual rental, you know, payment, this is the lease rate, I would think you would want liability in there. I mean, that's very, very important, not only for the person leasing, but for the person leasing to that person. That's a big one. I know. And I'm not totally


up on that law in Iowa. But I know they tried to change that a few years back, where if you did lease, the landowner would be liable for someone on their land. So I think all those things need to be looked at, you know, it's something if I was leasing land, I would take it very seriously. And if I was the person trying to lease out that land to a hunter, I would want that document spelled out very concisely. So everybody knew up front here, here's the parameters. Okay, I've got cattle back there, I really don't want you back there. So here's a boundary, I might even include a map showing the boundaries of here's where you can be, here's where you can't be. Here's the gates, you can access a we've had a ton of rain in southeast Iowa the last few weeks, I don't know where it was when they needed it. But here it is, right? Maybe we can't have you driving on these fields, because they're kind of steep, and we don't want erosion. So all those things you could think of you know that in the end, you want everything very clear and concise for both parties I would think.

 Olivia Hanlon 17:00

Okay. So liability, what does that look like? I know, you said it's changed in the past couple years, could you give us kind of a rough outline of what a landowner would be liable for, as compared to the leaser?

 Kevin Andersen 17:13

Yeah, and I don't know all the laws, but I would literally have if you had two lawyers or one lawyer, if you agreed on that, I would say, and what does Iowa law state? What do we need to have in here? So I would say both parties are protected, you know, because the worst case scenario would be, you're hanging a tree stand or you're setting up a blind and you wrenched your ankle or you, God forbid fall out of a tree or something. No one ever wants to happen, who assumes that liability, you know, is that a is that on the landowner is that on the person that's leasing, I would want that to be in there. I think that is vitally important if you're doing that, because those things are going to happen, hopefully never happen. But you know, Murphy's Law, you know, something's going to happen. So I would want to know, you know, and I, if I ever do it, I wouldn't want it to be, you know, 20 pages of Oh, my gosh, this is just all legalese. But I would want it very simple and very spelled out who was liable for this and who was liable for that.


 Olivia Hanlon 18:20

Okay, so we've talked a lot about finding someone and setting up a lease, Kevin. But what happens when we've got individuals who have not reached out to us, how do we handle them being on your land, and them not having permission to hunt there?

 Kevin Andersen 18:36

Right and I hear about that stuff. And I know it happens. I've had it happen to me when I've been out hunting and sometimes it's just not good communication between possibly the landowner and the other people that are hunting there. I hunt several farms down here in southeast Iowa that have multiple people that hunt, so if you can kind of figure out, hey, I know

Joe, or Tom or Kevin is over there hunting. Maybe we all communicate, but trespassing happens. Everyone's like, "Oh, it happens probably more in your part of the state." I'm like, not necessarily. I think it happens everywhere. You know, it's unfortunate but what do you do if you're the landowner and you find someone trespassing or you've seen you know, a gate knocked down or whatever, I always have them either call your conservation officer, your game warden, because it's a legal issue or call your county sheriff or your local law enforcement. I don't know exactly what that law states but I know if you do find someone trespassing, I don't think you have to have your land posted but it's always good that if you don't want people on there to me, just say no hunting or by permission only or whatever. I know some states have if you don't post your land, it's legal to go hunt or trespass on that land. I think North Dakota is that way yet, and I know that state was trying to change that law, but because I've actually went up there and hunted before in the past. I always felt like I was looking over my shoulder thinking, "Oh, my gosh, is the farmer going to come out?" You know, because when I grew up, we just went and asked. You know, my dad and granddad always told me, just don't go there unless you ask, but we know people do it. I always reach out to law enforcement. And I don't think a lot of people ever want that controversy, like, Ah, I don't want to kick someone off my land. But if they're not supposed to be there, and maybe you've got a lease and someone else's, you know, coming in on on the backside, and I do work with a lot of out of area, maybe I will residents that own land down here, or someone from New Jersey, or someone from Texas, or California that owns land here. And one of the first questions they always say, "What about poaching? Or what about people that trespass?" And I'm like, it just doesn't happen to you, folks. You know, you're not you're non residents. It happens to people that live right on the land. It's unfortunate, but it does happen. I always reach out to law enforcement.

 Olivia Hanlon 21:00

Okay. We've covered a lot here today. Kevin, is there anything that we did not get covered that you'd like to add?

 Kevin Andersen 21:06

I just, I think it's a good thing. I hunt, you know, I trapped, I fish, I live the lifestyle, you could say. I think it's a great sport, all of them. I think all of them whether you fish, whether you camp, whether you hunt. I mean, just getting outdoors, and I think recreating on the land is a wonderful thing. I think encouraging hunting and fishing and trapping and all those great sports is a great thing for the state of Iowa, we're probably world renowned in what we have here. Everyone thinks of us as corn and beans and hogs and cattle. And we are that, you know, we are that. But we also have some beautiful land that people can recreate on and go out and hunt. And as long as they're respectful, as long as there are people that get invited onto that land are respectful. And I always like to and I've used this term for years. Most of the farms I hunt on, you know, I don't pay for it. But I do pay for it. I call it sweat equity. If you know if those landowners want a prescribed fire done, I'm like, When are we doing it? And when do you want me to show up, you know, show up with my drip torch and you know, my fire garb and we'll go burn or if they say, Hey, we're wanting to cut some firewood this winter after the deer season, would you be willing to help? And I'm like, Yeah, anything you guys want build fence, burn a CRP field. So I think that's something that maybe it's a lost art, maybe it's a lost thing. But if I was looking to go hunt on someone's land, I'm not saying you have to go help that farmer or landowner every day. But you might offer to maybe they need a building painted,



maybe you have a specialty that you could help them out with something. You know, I think that will help people get on land, maybe a little bit quicker if you just say what can I do to help you out on the farm sometime?

**O** Olivia Hanlon 22:53

Yeah, for sure. So okay, so we've talked about the leases and things like that, Kevin, is there a good spot if people want more information about having others come in and hunt on their land? Is there a good website or something like that, that they can go to?

**K** Kevin Andersen 23:08

I know, it's on our website. I know, it's on our Iowa DNR website. I was telling Olivia earlier that I was looking for it this morning. And when you look for something, and you're I wasn't under the gun, but I was like, Oh my gosh, I can't find this. I know there used to be whether it was on our website or Extension's website where hunters and landowners could basically find each other. I couldn't find it this morning on our website. I will look further. But I welcome everyone to look at our website.

**O** Olivia Hanlon 23:37

All right. Well, thank you again for joining us today, Kevin. It was great to have you on and we hope to have you back again in the future.

**K** Kevin Andersen 23:43

It's great to be on here again with you Olivia and I wish you a good fall.

**O** Olivia Hanlon 23:48

You too.

**K** Kevin Andersen 23:49

Thanks.

**S** Speaker 3 23:50

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