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The translation is provided by the Governor of Svalbard.

THE GOVERNOR OF SVALBARD'S GUIDELINES FOR FIREARMS AND PROTECTIVE AND SCARING EQUIPMENT AGAINST POLAR BEARS

Adopted and enters into force on 13 May 2024 pursuant to Act 20 April 2018 No. 7 on weapons, firearms, weapon parts and ammunition (Weapons Act) and regulation of 07 May 2021 No. 1452 on firearms, firearm parts and ammunition etc. (Weapons Regulations) § 5-7 fourth subsection and § 6-11 etc.

1. Preliminary provisions

As a general rule, it is permitted to possess *one* firearm for use as polar bear protection per person, cf. the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 first subsection.

The need for polar bear protection ceases when one leaves or moves from Svalbard. If you move from the archipelago and possess a weapon for polar bear protection, this must be disposed of or transferred to another area of use before the person concerned leaves Svalbard.

2. Weapon types

2.1 Rifle

- Rifles are permitted to be acquired for use as polar bear protection in Svalbard in accordance with the Weapons Act and the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 first subsection.

- Anyone who applies for acquisition for this purpose must meet the general requirements for character, sobriety, and propriety in the Weapons Act, §§ 15 et seq., as well as document "sufficient weapons proficiency" for the weapon in question, cf. Weapons Regulations §§ 5-7, third subsection.

- Only bolt-action rifles in calibre 308 Win. or 30-06 Sprg. are approved for polar bear protection.

- Ammunition must be used with an expanding projectile, which has an impact energy of at least 2200 Joules at a distance of 100 metres. The bullet weight must be at least 10 grams (154 grains).

- It is permitted to use rifles with manual reloading that have been acquired on other grounds that meet the requirements for minimum calibre, bullet weight and impact energy.

NOTE: *For reasons of precision, range, stopping power, functionality and reliability in cold conditions, the Governor recommends rifles as the primary means of protection against polar bears over other types of weapons. An acquisition permit for one-handed weapons will only be granted in exceptional cases, cf. § 5-7 of the Weapons Regulations.*

Authority: Weapons Act §§ 15 to 17, Weapons Regulations § 5-7. The fee is stipulated in § 12-2 of the Weapons Regulations.

2.2 Shotguns

- Shotguns are permitted to be acquired for use as polar bear protection in Svalbard in accordance with the Weapons Act and the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 first subsection.

- Anyone who applies for acquisition for this purpose must meet the general requirements for character, sobriety, and propriety in the Weapons Act §§ 15 et seq., as well as document "sufficient weapons proficiency" for the weapon in question, cf. the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 third subsection.

- Shotguns for use as polar bear protection must be at least calibre 12 and should at least have a magazine for four shots (semi-auto and pump-action shotguns). It is recommended to use "slugs" (shotgun ammunition with one projectile) for polar bear protection.

NOTE: *The Governor points out that magazine shotguns can be prone to icing and condensation problems, and therefore require more preventive maintenance to function in demanding conditions. The governor advises against the use of the double-barrelled shotgun for use as protection against polar bear attacks due to the number of shots available. It is not permitted to rent/hire a shotgun for use as polar bear protection.*

Authority: Weapons Act §§ 15 to 17, Weapons Regulations § 5-7. The fee is stipulated in § 12-2 of the Weapons Regulations.

2.3 Single-handed weapon/revolver

- Single-handed weapons for use as polar bear protection must use ammunition with a projectile diameter of 10.9 millimetres or greater, with a bullet weight of at least 14.9 grams cf. the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 second paragraph.
- Acquisition of a single-handed weapon (revolver) can be permitted for use as polar bear protection in accordance with § 5-7 second subsection of the Weapons Regulations in the following cases:
 - where the applicant can document a factual need (for example, trappers or others with a documented official need) for firearms that are easier to carry than rifles and shotguns, and
 - where the applicant can document "adequate firearm skills" on a revolver. This entails the same requirements that are imposed on competition shooters according to § 4-6 of the Weapons Regulations (dispensation can be granted in special cases), and
 - where the applicant meets the general requirements for character, sobriety, decency and age, cf. the Weapons Act §§ 15 et seq.
- A revolver acquired for sport shooting can be used for polar bear protection, as long as the weapon uses ammunition with a projectile diameter of 10.9 millimetres or larger, with a bullet weight of at least 14.9 grams. (min.44 Magnum) cf. the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 second subsection.
- Only people who have a permit for a revolver and are registered in the Population Register in Svalbard can use a revolver for polar bear protection. (Dispensation may be granted in special cases).

NOTE: *A revolver is short and easy to transport, and it is easy to carry both on the body and in vehicles. However, the actual use of a revolver places great demands on the user's shooting skills and the weapon has a limited range compared to a rifle. This affects, among other things, the ability to protect groups of people. The Norwegian Defense Logistics Organization concluded in 2015 that in practice there are few handguns that are suitable for self-defense against polar bears, and that in that case a revolver in calibre 44 or larger is the best alternative.*

Authority: Weapons Act §§ 15 to 17, Weapons Regulations § 5-7. The fee is stipulated in § 12-2 of the Weapons Regulations.

3. Rental of firearms for protection against polar bear attacks

- It is permitted to borrow/rent a rifle approved for polar bear protection. It is not permitted to hire single-handed weapons or shotguns for use as polar bear protection.
- Renting a rifle can take place under the following conditions:
 - Rental of firearms can only be done by arms dealers with a license to operate rentals, cf. Weapons Act § 23 and the Weapons Regulations § 9-1.
 - In the case of rental, the rules for lending apply:
 - The person renting a weapon must present a Norwegian weapons card, a European firearms pass (EFP), or a valid loan permit,
 - Applications for a license to borrow firearms for protection against polar bear are assessed according to the same rules as for acquisitions in the Weapons Regulations § 5-7 and the Weapons Act's requirements for character, sobriety, and decency cf. the Weapons Act § 16 and the Weapons Regulations § 7-4 et seq.
 - Rented weapons must not be handed over to others,
 - The owner of the rented weapon must give the borrower a loan statement in accordance with § 6-9 of the Weapons Regulations,
 - The borrower must always carry the rental declaration together with the loan permit/gun card/gun passport when the person in question carries or transports firearms or ammunition.
 - The owner must otherwise follow the requirements of Chapter 9 of the Weapons Regulations.

Authority: Weapons Act Section 18, Weapons Regulations §§ 6-9 to 6-11

4. Lending of firearms for protection against polar bear attacks

4.1 Lending between private individuals

- Anyone who has a license to have firearms and weapon parts subject to a license in accordance with §§ 5 or 6 of the Weapons Act can borrow the corresponding weapon. If the borrower does not have a Norwegian firearms license or a European firearms pass for either a rifle or a shotgun, or for a higher weapon category, the person concerned must apply for a permit to borrow firearms for protection against polar bears. Applications for a loan permit are assessed according to the same rules as for acquisitions in § 5-7 of the Weapons Regulations and the Weapons Act's requirements for character, sobriety, and propriety.
- Only rifles and shotguns can be borrowed for use as polar bear protection. It is not permitted to borrow single-handed weapons for this purpose between private individuals.
- An application for a license to borrow firearms entails a fee to the Governor according to the rates set out in the Weapons Regulations § 12-2 no. 6.
- Borrowed weapons must not be handed over to others.
- The lender must provide the borrower with a loan statement in accordance with § 6-9 of the Weapons Regulations.

- The loan statement must relate to a specified weapon and the relevant weapon number must be stated on the loan statement.
- The time period for the loan must be stated in the loan statement.

Authority: Weapons Act § 18, Weapons Regulations § 6-11

4.2 Loans from companies etc. to members or employees of the organisation

- Anyone who has a license to have firearms and weapon parts subject to a license in accordance with §§ 5 or 6 of the Weapons Act can borrow the corresponding weapon. Persons who do not have a firearms license for the corresponding type of weapon must apply for a permit to borrow firearms.
- Lending of firearms from companies to members or employees of the organization for use as polar bear protection must take place in accordance with §§ 6-9 and 6-10 of the Weapons Regulations. The company must have a named weapons officer who meets the requirements for good character, personal qualities, and weapons skills.
- Companies can lend single-handed weapons to employees or members of the organization in accordance with §§ 6-9 and 6-10 of the Weapons Regulations. This assumes that the borrower has a Norwegian firearms license or a European firearms pass for a weapon in the same weapon category – i.e. revolver or pistol.
- The rental period must be fixed in time and must coincide with the length of the employment relationship, possibly a shorter period based on specific needs.

NOTE: *The lender must ensure that the borrower has a Norwegian firearms license or European firearms passport for either a rifle or shotgun or a “higher weapon category” (single-handed weapon/high-capacity weapon). Weapon categories (from low-high): **Hunting weapons** (rifle and shotgun) – **single-handed weapons** (revolver and pistol) – **high-capacity weapons with high damage potential** (semi-automatic weapons). You can acquire/borrow/rent your way down the categories, but not the other way around. This means that if you have a firearms license for a one-handed weapon, you can hire a rifle for polar bear protection.*

- Employees/members who have a valid weapon card/borrowing permit can borrow weapons from the company’s weapon pool. The person in charge of weapons in the company decides which weapon is to be lent out against a loan statement.

Authority: Weapons Act § 18, Weapons Regulations §§ 6-9 et seq.

5. Ammunition and other scaring devices

5.1 Rubber bullets or rubber baton rounds for shotguns

- Rubber bullets/ rubber baton rounds (rubber slugs) for shotguns are allowed to be acquired for use as protection against polar bear.
- The Governor emphasizes that using rubber bullets for this purpose requires special expertise and can entail risks. To avoid injuring the polar bear, the shot must be aimed as far as possible at the animal's rear.
- Retailers of this type of ammunition are obliged to state that rubber bullets are a secondary and defensive means of protection. Rubber bullets cannot under any circumstances replace weapons with live ammunition.

5.2 Pepper/OC spray/bear spray/pepper bullets

- The use of bear spray and pepper bullets for use as protection against polar bear in Svalbard is not permitted. The Weapons Regulations § 3-6 first subsection no. 2 prohibits the acquisition, possession, manufacture, and sale as well as the importation of pepper spray. Any applications for a license according to § 5-10 of the Weapons Regulations will not be granted for this purpose.

5.3 Signal gun, signal pen and trip flare

- Signal pistols, signal pens, trip flares and ammunition for these are exempt from the license requirement, cf. the Weapons Regulations § 2-3 no. 2 and § 2-6.
- Signal pistols, signal pens and trip flares are permitted to be acquired, borrowed, and rented for use as **a deterrent**.
- Signal pistols, signal pens and trip flares must be kept locked in a cupboard, drawer or other lockable device, cf. the Weapons Regulations § 6-6, subsection 2.

6. Transport of firearms and ammunition

- When transporting a firearm within the settlements, a vital part of the weapon must be removed.
- The rules of the Weapons Regulations in § 6-7, second subsection, apply correspondingly to motor vehicles in Svalbard. Exceptions apply to firearms and ammunition transported on snowmobiles outside settlements. Outside settlements, the snowmobile can be left without the vital part of the firearm being removed. Within the settlements, a vital part of the weapon must always be removed if the snowmobile is left.
- When transporting a weapon outside the settlements, the weapon is considered "in use". The same applies during transportation, when using a motorized vehicle such as a snowmobile, boat etc.

NOTE: *Anyone who is to have a license to acquire, borrow or rent firearms for use as polar bear protection must meet the general requirements for character, sobriety, and propriety in the Weapons Act §§ 15 et seq.*

7. Temporary importation of firearms for polar bear protection

7.1 Temporary importation without a European firearms pass (EFP)

Foreign citizens who do not have a European weapons pass and who are to temporarily import firearms, weapon parts or ammunition into Norwegian customs territory must have permission from the police cf. the Weapons Regulations § 10-14 first subsection. It follows from the firearms regulations § 10-14 first subsection that:

The police can grant permission to people who:

1. must use firearms for hunting, sport shooting or collecting activities,
2. meets the minimum age requirements according to Section 15 of the Weapons Act for the type of weapon in question, and
3. has valid permission from the home country to have the firearms, weapon parts and ammunition to be imported.

On the basis of § 5-7 last subsection of the Weapons Regulations, the Governor has decided that the provision relating to hunting is given corresponding application for the temporary importation of firearms for polar bear protection on Svalbard. Both juridical and natural persons can apply for

temporary importation under this provision. Imported weapons for sport shooting or collecting activities are not permitted.

When applying for the temporary importation of firearms, weapon parts or ammunition, the prescribed form must be used. The application must be accompanied by documentation of the applicant's identity and that the firearm(s) applied for is to be used for polar bear protection. An application for temporary importation is sent to the Governor of Svalbard, no later than two months before entry, cf. the Weapons Regulations § 10-14 second subsection.

The Governor can only grant permission for the temporary importation of firearms, weapon parts and ammunition that can legally be used for the stated purpose, cf. point 1. It is specified that no permission is granted for the importation of single-handed weapons or semi-automatic weapons.

A permit for temporary importation can be granted for a stay on Svalbard for up to three months, and applies as firearms permit for the firearms, weapon parts and ammunition that are imported pursuant to a given permit.

In the case of an application for temporary importation without a European firearms pass, a fee is charged cf. the Weapons Regulations § 12-2 no. 14.

7.2 Temporary importation with a European firearms pass

A foreign citizen with a valid European firearms pass may, for a period of up to three months, temporarily bring in firearms, weapon parts and ammunition listed in the firearms passport for participation in hunting, sport shooting or collecting activities cf. the Weapons Regulations § 10-15 first subsection.

Along with the firearm, ammunition can also be imported in reasonable quantities that are suitable for the firearm to be imported. Only firearms and ammunition can be imported that can legally be used for the purpose for which they are imported.

On the basis of § 5-7 last subsection of the Weapons Regulations, the Governor has decided that the provision relating to hunting is given corresponding application for the temporary importation of firearms for polar bear protection in Svalbard. Imported weapons for sport shooting or collecting activities are not permitted.

It is specified that the importation of single-handed weapons or semi-automatic weapons is not permitted.

8. Briefly on the processing of applications

8.1 Applications from residents on the mainland

Persons residing on the Norwegian mainland must apply to the police district where the person concerned has a registered address. The Governor will not process applications from people who live on the mainland.

8.2 Language

Additional documentation for weapons applications must be translated into Norwegian or English.

8.3 Police certificates from abroad

The Police Register Act and the Police register regulations stipulate that police certificates of conduct from other countries cannot be required to be presented during a background check, but do not prevent such certificates from being presented and weighted when assessing whether an exception can be made to the residence requirement according to § 7-7 of the Weapons Regulations. The Governor may therefore place importance on information from such certificates or similar in his assessment of whether an exception should be made pursuant to § 7-7 third subsection of the Weapons Regulations.

However, it is a prerequisite that the documentation sheds sufficient light on the applicant's possible criminal history, and that the Governor considers that the documentation is satisfactory.

8.4 Briefly about the requirement for "adequate weapon proficiency", cf. the Weapons Regulations § 5-7

The requirement for "adequate weapon proficiency" is a general condition for acquiring, renting, or borrowing weapons for use as polar bear protection. Examples of this can be documented sport shooting, completed national service in the armed forces, entry into the Norwegian hunters' register or documented completion of an approved safety course in weapon handling (for example under the auspices of UNIS). In addition, the granting authority can approve other documented longer-term use of weapons. It is the applicant himself who must document that the condition has been met. The Governor points out that the documentation is assessed concretely and individually.
