

NEW TO DEER HUNTING? HERE ARE SOME TIPS

Rule #1: Firearm Safety. Always assume your firearm is loaded; maintain muzzle control at all times. Keep your finger outside the trigger guard and keep safety on until ready to shoot. Point your firearm only at what you intend to shoot (don't use your scope as binoculars). Know your target and what's beyond.

Rule #2: Have a hunt plan. Always let someone who likes you know where you are. If you move stands, let them know

Rule #3: Enjoy every hunt! A safe hunt is a successful hunt. Watching nature and wildlife that doesn't know you are there is a gift. Don't let technology or science ruin the experience. Always project a positive image.

HUNTING TIPS

Firearm selection: Hunt with the most powerful cartridge that you can shoot ACCURATELY. Practice the fundamentals of an accurate shot. Practice with the same ammunition you plan to use for hunting

Dress for the weather: Comfort is key. Bring water, food if planning to stay out for an extended hunt.

Good optics and flashlights: Consider having a head and handheld light. Buy the best optics you can afford.

Spend time in the woods: the best way to learn deer is to watch them any chance you get.

Scent is a major obstacle to overcome. You can never be 100% scent free; so always hunt the wind. Consider bathing with scent free soaps before the hunt/hand wash with special focus on hands, face, hair. Use unscented or Scent-making detergents; keep clothing, shoes in sealed plastic bag between hunts. Scent masking clothing might help

Vision comes in a close second. Deer look for movement. The more still you can sit, the slower you move, the less likely you will draw attention to yourself. Survey the area before you move. Raise binoculars slowly and close to your body. Don't jerk around to check out a noise – deer are always watching.

Sound isn't far behind. Consider approaching your stand with short quick steps, then stop vs walking cadence. Remove leaves, twigs from stand. If an unnatural sound is made (metal, plastic, Velcro, cough, cell phone alert) don't move - deer will be alert and looking in your direction so as to identify whether or not that sound means danger.

Deer move to eat. Hunting trails, or hunting travel corridors between seasonal food (acorns, privet, greenbrier, persimmon, honeysuckle, agriculture) and the cover, may improve your odds of seeing deer.

Deer are creatures of the edge. Look inside the tree line/woods for movement. Watch for flashes of white, horizontal lines. Mature deer will often circle a field before entering – hunting the woods often offers shot opportunity.

Stand locations. Scout early looking for sign (animal and human), seasonal food sources, and cover. Consider locations that have good back cover, good access, nearby cover (thickets, woods, shrubs, ditches, agriculture). A great site is near edge, trails (deer follow path of least resistance), sites near seasonal food, funnels, and/or travel corridors. Having evergreen cover around/near/behind the stand provides great cover. Use a compass to set up to take best use of prevailing wind, sun. Simulate a hunt when setting a stand – anticipate and test shooting possibilities; clear branches if necessary, but avoid leaving yourself too out in the open. Clear shooting lanes as needed. Use tacks to guide you both in and out – trails disappear in the dark.

Tree stand safety. Always test ratchets before using the stand, replace no less than annually. Clear debris from base of stand. Use harness & haul line. Remember that steps can be slippery on cold mornings. Maintain 3 points of contact while climbing up and down and take your time. Keep cell phone, relieve strap, and knife on your person. Use only TMA approved stands.

Timing. Although deer are spotted most often early morning and late afternoon, the more time you spend in the woods, the more opportunity you'll have. Many suggest that mid-day is a great time to spot mature animals. Coming in when deer are not likely to be in the field (avoiding pre-dawn, for example). You may also improve sighting opportunity – especially if looking for mature animal's mid-day especially during the rut as bucks move all day.

NEW TO DEER HUNTING? HERE ARE SOME TIPS

Rain is a great time to hunt. (Provided it's not a downpour). Some believe that deer move to feed with change of barometric pressure - just before, after a storm.

Plan ahead. Test (and continue to monitor) wind direction. Identify shooting lanes. Clear as needed if this can be done quickly, quietly. Practice shooting positions before you load a cartridge. Have binoculars, calls/whistle, windicator be ready. Set scope on lowest effective power (it's always easier to dial up on game far away than dial down on close game) Load a cartridge in your chamber. Settle yourself. Remain as still as possible. Don't ever use your scope as binoculars.

Understanding behavioral clues can help. Young deer are usually the first deer in the field. Deer are curious. Deer have short attention spans- the longer they stand at alert the more likely they won't run. Head bobbing is a strategy they use to keep track of their surroundings – watch their eyes before you move. Ears forward, raised hair, stiff stance, foot stomps, raised tail are all signs of suspected trouble. Wheezing lets other deer know to get out and a good sign the deer is ready to bolt, but could also be used to startle a predator (hunter) and get them to move. Deer vocalizations are not common but important to recognize; listen to phone app. Grunt, Bleat, wheeze Watch a deer's focus – they'll spot other deer before you will.

Young deer (especially button bucks) are often the first deer onto the field. Wait, Watch. If a deer looks back, look in that direction as well. Wait if you can. There is almost always more than one deer in the woods.

Seasonal calls. They may work. Just don't overdo it. Rattling during the rut may be worth a try. Calls are always a great way to stop a deer walking for a good shot – just be ready; they'll be looking in your direction.

Spotting a deer. Won't always (usually don't) hear a deer coming. Don't look for a whole deer. Instead watch for movement, horizontal lines, white flash, anything unusual (might smell them if during the rut). Look through the trees.

Taking the shot. Know your limitations. Take a shot only if confident of a clean ethical kill. Be sure of your target; know what is in front of and beyond your target; execute as practiced. Wait for the deer to give you a good heart/lung shot. Use a low whistle/call to stop a moving deer, but be ready to shoot before you draw attention to yourself. Aim carefully, deep breath, ½ release, squeeze, follow through. Watch for the movement of game only after the air has cleared to avoid jumping the gun.

After the shot. Identify shot location; note object (near and far) you'll see when on the ground – terrain changes when you get down! Then wait – 15 minutes to an hour to give time for the animal to lay down and expire quietly. If early in the day, stay in our stand. You may have the opportunity to watch/harvest another deer.

Blood trailing. Move quietly along the trail. Avoid damaging the blood sign. Mark your trail w/ toilet paper so you can retrace your steps and start over if you have to. Look for blood sign on ground and brush. Don't give up; circle back as needed. May not bleed immediately. Be prepared to hike. Bring firearm/bow, license & big game report card. Consider bringing a pack if the animal is not found quickly: headlamp, good flashlight, cell phone, knife, rope, small tarp & water recommended. May need to wait until morning if cannot locate – this is usually OK.

Downed deer. Approach slowly; be prepared for finishing shot. Watch for breathing, movement. Throw stick/rock before getting too close. Eyes should be open if deer is dead.

Punch your big game tag before moving the deer – but don't punch until you know the deer is dead!

Dead deer are heavy! Doe are hard to grab onto - a small tarp may help drag a deer from the woods; a length of rope or deer drag are very helpful; a deer cart or 4-wheeler can make it much easier. Mark the trail if you have to leave the deer to get assistance. Leave your name, phone number, harvest ID number on carcass if you must leave it.

Call 1-800-I-Got-One by noon the following day or before butchering your game or transferring your game to someone else (whichever comes first). Keep evidence of sex until call in is made and authorization number recorded on your big game tag.