

Tips for Recovering Game Animals

All hunters are ethically required to stop the hunt for the purpose of searching for game animals after the shot. The following is a list of some simple steps to follow:

- **Immediately after the shot** visually note the location of the hunter, game animal, and the last place the game animal was seen before disappearing into the woods or brush. Sounds can indicate direction of travel when game animal is out of visual range so listen carefully.
- **Pay attention** because game animals often react a certain way when hit with a bullet or arrow. For example, deer shot in the vitals may jump in the air and kick before running. A gut-shot deer may hunch-up and wobble as it runs off. Crashing sounds usually indicate a well-placed shot, fatal wound, and short tracking distance.
- **Wait** at least 15-30 minutes or more before tracking unless the game animal goes down within visual sight of the hunter. Poorly-hit game animals require longer waiting periods (*1 hour or more*) especially in the case of a gut (*stomach*) shot.
- **Begin searching** the ground and low-hanging brush for signs of blood, hair, bone fragments, tissue, feathers and tracks. Kicked-up woodland debris can also provide direction of travel.
- **Blood color** provides valuable information. Bright and frothy (*lung shot*), Bright non-frothy (*severed artery*), Dark (*muscle or liver hit*), Dark with vegetative material (*gut shot*). As a general rule, large amounts of bright frothy blood equal short tracking distance.
- **Mark the trail** with biodegradable material like tissue and step along side the trail (*not in it*) to avoid erasing sign. This is important if backtracking becomes necessary.
- **Seek help** from hunting companions when tracking because several sets of eyes are better than one especially when tracking is difficult due to low light or inclement weather conditions.
- **If you lose the trail** change strategies by walking in ever-widening circles or parallel “transect” lines. Remain ready for a follow-up shot in case the game animal flushes from cover.
- **Approach** downed game animals from behind. If eyes are closed and breathing apparent another shot may be required. If eyes are open, touch near the eye with a stick or branch to promote a response. If the game animal does not blink or move it is likely dead.

Ethical Law-Abiding Hunters.....

- **PRACTICE** *before the season to prevent the loss of game animals through wounding.*
- **NEVER** *use equipment in which they are unfamiliar or unable to accurately shoot.*
- **KNOW** *that the goal of every hunter is a quick-clean kill and not wanton waste of wildlife.*
- **DO NOT** *give up tracking until convinced that all reasonable efforts to recover have been exhausted.*

