

## Care of Self and Equipment

Hunting is a very natural and rewarding activity that provides both healthy eating and exercise as well. Some forms of hunting require minimal physical activity while others can be quite strenuous. A squirrel hunt in the woodlot behind the home requires little physical activity other than a simple walk in the woods. Conversely, a hunt requiring long distance walking and packing or dragging out big game animals from steep and rugged terrain can be very taxing. A strenuous hunt for a normally inactive and or overweight person could result in a very miserable day, or worse.

Staying fit is the key to enjoying the hunt no matter what age a hunter is, terrain features encountered or game hunted. Staying fit can be accomplished by simply eating healthy, maintaining proper body weight, and getting regular exercise. A simple exercise routine including walking and light weight training several times per week can make spending time in the outdoors enjoyable and safe. Sedentary or older folks should always seek the advice and guidance of their doctor before beginning any exercise routine.

Wearing proper fitting clothing and footwear that protect a hunter from the elements also contribute to a more enjoyable hunt. Many forms of hunting require that a hunter remain still and quiet for long periods. Hunters cannot remain still and quiet if they are shivering from wet and cold. Worse yet, improper clothing and footwear can contribute to becoming hypothermic which can be deadly.

It is also very important to stay hydrated and nourished while hunting, especially if a hunter plans on being out for the entire day. Having ample water is important, especially in warm temperatures or in places where water is not readily available. The hunt will also be more enjoyable if it begins with a good breakfast and maintained throughout the day with high energy foods like whole grains, fruits, granola and nuts.

Safety should always be a top priority when hunting especially handling firearms and using tree stands. Hunters need always remember to point the muzzle in a safe direction (*firearms safety rule # 1*) and always wear a full-body harness while tree stand hunting. Although there are other safety rules, the two mentioned can go a long way toward preventing severe or fatal injuries.

A thorough checking of oneself after the hunt is also good practice. Simple scrapes, cuts, and abrasions should be treated promptly to prevent infection. Removal of insects and ticks helps to avoid or lessen the chance of infectious diseases. If hunting with dogs, they should be inspected and treated as necessary. Hunting dogs become family members; not merely hunting companions. Hunting dogs, not unlike their owner, should receive regular exercise both pre and post-season and fed a proper diet toward maintaining suitable health and weight. Seeking the advice and services of a good Veterinarian is a great way to care for

your valued hunting companion. Not unlike most things in life, when the time to act has come, the time to prepare has past. Preseason planning will contribute to an enjoyable and safe hunting season.

### **Care of Equipment**

Inspecting equipment prior to the season, maintaining it during the season, and preparing it for storage afterwards is a hunter's responsibility. Firearms, bows and arrows will only be reliable and functional if they are properly cared for. This includes cleaning firearms after shooting to remove fouling from the barrel and action, as well as regular maintenance and lubrication to avoid malfunctions and prevent rusting.

Tree stands including hang-on, climbers, and ladders should never be used without first given a thorough pre-season inspection. This becomes more critical for tree stands remaining outdoors permanently, especially those made of wood. Rust and rotting due to exposure and the elements can permanently damage tree stands creating a potential safety hazard if not inspected on a regular basis.

Hunting clothing and footwear can easily be maintained by keeping it clean and dry. Storing wet or damp clothing or footwear encourages damage from mold and mildew. Washing hunting clothing in non-scent detergents and either line-drying, or in a dryer at low settings, will contribute to preserving your investment for many years. A great way to both manage and protect your hunting equipment is to create an inventory and maintenance list for pre and post-season inspection. In this way, there is less chance that something may be overlooked, lost, unsafe, or unprotected.