

Now is the Time

Being Prepared for the Opener

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As I awaited the approaching dawn on the opening day of the archery season, I went over one last mental checklist of my equipment. With my bow tuned, broadheads sharp, and my calls within reach, all I needed was an opportunity.

After watching two groups of does pass just out of range, I noticed movement out on the ridge on the edge of the thicket I was watching. With the sun shining from behind me, I could see the glint of antlers immediately. I slowly reached for my grunt call and gave two short grunts. The two bucks started my way. They were following a trail that would bring them right past my tree. As they approached, I slowly turned into position for a shot. The lead buck was a year-and-a-half old four point. The second deer was larger, and I could easily count seven nice points. He came slowly forward and stopped in one of the shooting lanes I had trimmed months earlier. After a fairly routine shot, the buck crashed forward 30 yards and collapsed. After gathering my equipment and climbing from my stand, I found my arrow and proceeded to walk to the deer. As I kneeled beside him, I thought how after months and hours of preparation, my quest for a buck lasted only an hour and a half. I didn't mind though because I enjoy the pre-season work almost as much as the hunt itself.

Get Prepared Now

There are a lot of things you can do to help you be successful this season, and now is the time to be doing it. After post-season and spring scouting, there are many things an archery hunter should do to prepare for this coming fall.

Usually in June, I will get out my archery gear, which I keep in a large plastic container from year to year. I inspect everything, and make a list of things that I need to buy or replace for the coming season. This gives me plenty of time so that I can buy something once every week or so rather than one big expensive shopping spree the week before opening day. My regular list of needed items includes things such as my license, broadhead blades, scent, clothes wash, etc.

Hopefully, before September you have stand locations picked out and shooting lanes trimmed. This is important if you expect deer to maintain their early season patterns. Going in with pruning shears and saws the week before you plan to hunt will surely alert the deer as to what's up.



Being prepared helped the author take this buck on opening day of the 2005 season.

Kevin Burgess

Equipment and Clothing

I like to build six arrows, which I will use strictly for hunting. I will practice with these arrows with broadheads installed. I will then replace the blades before I hunt with them. Make sure the arrows all fly well and hit where you aim. You should only shoot one arrow at a time to keep from busting your heads and cutting your fletchings.

Also, the week before the season is a good time to wash and store your hunting clothes. I like to wash mine in a scent-free soap and hang them outside to dry. Then, with clean hands, I place them



Treestands should be inspected carefully each year before use.

in doubled plastic garbage bags and mark the bags as to what's inside, such as pants, shirts, jackets, etc. I also like to spray each article of clothing down with a good cover scent, such as Apparition Appalachian Woodlands. This is a good all-around scent that blends in well no matter where I decide to hunt.

Treestands are another item you need to prepare well ahead of hunting season. We place our lives in the security of these stands, and they require regular maintenance. Check for loose bolts, dry straps, or any cracked welds. Also, oil any moving parts or bushings with a scent-free oil. Don't forget to also wash the seat cushion on your stand. This is an item that has soaked up foreign scents all year long while hanging in your garage or basement.

Fitness and Accuracy

Our bodies are another piece of equipment we don't want to neglect. If you're over 40, you should have a physical each year before the season. Also, brisk walking, shooting, practicing climbing, and scouting should help you stay in shape, and this will help you hunt harder and enjoy the hunt much more.

Of course, by this time you should have begun to shoot your bow. This is also a good time to take a trip to the pro shop and have your bow tuned and checked out. Or, if you are skilled at bow maintenance, you can do these things yourself. Learning to replace servings and making adjustments is fairly easy. Check your bow for any noises and fix them now.

As the season grows closer, your practice needs to increasingly duplicate hunting situations. I like to shoot at a 3-D target from various angles and distances. This helps to train my eye to judge yardage and pick a spot, rather than just a bullseye. 3-D shoots are also great practice to enhance your skills.

Conclusion

If you spend time before the season preparing all your equipment, you should be able to go out on opening morning feeling confident that everything is in the best condition that you can make it. Then, when the opportunity presents itself, you won't have to worry about anything but picking a spot.