

## Week of October 25, 2010 – Hunting Safety

This is hunting season. Whether using a gun or bow, it is paramount that safety is number one- it is even more important than catching that deer, elk or other game. Every hunting season, unfortunate events occur. And after understanding the events that lead to these mishaps, it is clear that every single one of them could have been prevented. While this is also the beginning of the holiday season where family and friends get together for good times, such tragedies can have a tremendous impact. So if you do hunt this season, or know others that participate in this activity, it is worth reminding ourselves as well as those we care about to be cautious and to practice safety ALL THE TIME... Let's keep this time of the year everything it is supposed to be: JOYOUS!

Below are a few things to remember when hunting:

1. Treat your disarmed gun or bow with the same respect that you would with a loaded bow or gun. ALWAYS assume that your gun or bow is loaded and ready to shoot.
2. NEVER, EVER point your gun or bow at anyone when unloaded.
3. Always point your weapon in a safe direction.
4. Keep your safety on until ready to shoot.
5. Do not become anxious and take your safety off of your weapon prior to the shot. That is why the safety is located usually within an inch of the trigger.
6. ALWAYS keep your target IN FRONT of you. That is crucial.
7. Clearly identify your target before you shoot. Every year individuals are shot because they are mistaken for a deer. Even 30 minutes before sunrise, one should clearly see their target before shooting.
8. Always unload your firearm; never climb into a tree stand, climb over a fence, in or over a duck blind with a loaded weapon.
9. Know the range of your weapon. Know how far it will shoot. Know what loads you have in the chamber. Know how accurate you are with a bow and how far that your bow will shoot. Know what is behind your target.
10. Keep your emotions in check. Use GOOD judgment. No animal, no deer, whether it is a pintail drake, large rooster pheasant climbing out of a morning's cornfield, or a 10 to 12-point buck is worth an accident. It is when these gifts of nature occur and our emotions rise that mistakes happen.
11. Ear safety: Many hunters will sacrifice ear safety so they can hear game coming, especially when deer hunting. Put a soft earplug in the ear closest to your weapon. All of our senses are precious and we must take care of them as best as possible.
12. Always keep your gun clean. When you unload your gun, if it is a pump, it is a good practice to make sure 2-3 ejections after the 3 shells come out that there is nothing in the chamber. Leave the chamber open. The same for automatics. Check and see if your barrel is free of any debris. Over the years, a mouse may find its way into your gun case. It can tear up some of the cotton, and cotton may be stuck in the barrel. If you shoot, you'll have a split barrel. The shrapnel could come back in your face, causing eye injuries and severe facial lacerations. Even a little bit of snow at the end of your barrel can cause a severe injury. When you drop your gun, you should always dismantle it, clean it, wipe it down, and put it back together.

13. As with any piece of equipment, a clean weapon is a functional weapon. This holds true with bows, as well. Check them before use to make sure they are in good working order. All parts of the bow should be tightened and in correct position, usually accomplished with an Allen wrench, prior to hunting.
14. Wear highly visible apparel such as blaze orange (or the latest in hunting fashion; covert orange) as deer cannot tell the difference from orange or red from green or brown (according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation)...but other hunters can.

It seems that animals are quite aware of this time of the year too! They are ready to run and dart out in front of vehicles. Wildlife-related crashes are a growing problem throughout the country. Vehicle accidents that involve animals on the road have increased 50 percent from 1990 to 2004 (based on the most recent federal data). The basic problem is that rural roads are being traveled by more and more people. Each year, about 200 people are killed in as many as two million wildlife-related crashes at a cost of more than \$8 billion, in a report prepared for the National Academies of Science. Ninety percent of the accidents occur on rural two-lane roads, and the most common animal involved is a deer. So practice driver safety when you drive in rural areas. Watch the road, slow down and DON'T TEXT!

Something else to keep in mind, is that this is also the season of cold stress (see last week's SafetyShare), so keeping warm while hunting, with the right clothing and being able to identify cold stress conditions is very important. Remember: hunting usually involves traveling on foot while in remote locations; so cold stress and hunting can be an extremely serious combination.

**"You can't wake a person who is pretending to be asleep. ~Navajo Proverb**

*Courtesy of Robert Brounstein, Corporate Director Safety and Health with TerranearPMC*