



LATE SEASON



WHITETAIL

TAG OUT

TACTICS:

BY SEAN WULLER - LAND SPECIALIST WITH UNITED COUNTRY TROPHY PROPERTIES & AUCTION FOR IOWA

AS THE end of the Whitetail hunting season draws to an end here in Iowa, some of us still have some tags that are burning holes in our pockets. While sitting around at our deer camp with our land managers & hunting buddies, we decided to come up with what we felt were our top 3 late season tag filling scenarios that we collectively like to use. Hopefully these tactics will help you fill your freezer and possibly put a mount or two on the wall this season.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FOOD:

When talking about our late season successes over the last 10 years, collectively we decided that it all starts with the late season food sources.

Between the six farms that we manage & hunt, food sources are scrutinized from season to season and are strategically located, in our minds,

at the optimum locations for year round hunting success. This is great if you have the ability to put your own food plots in and manage the land, but what about those of us that don't have that ability?

Finding and locating the most favorable food sources, such as recently harvested beans or corn, standing beans or corn,

alfalfa, turnips, rye or winter wheat fields, etc. is the first step in this plan. Once your optimum food source has been located, and heavily traveled trails have been identified,

DON'T HESITATE DURING THE PURSUIT GRANTED THE CHANCES OF JUMPING OR SPOOKING A DEER ARE HIGHLY POSSIBLE, THIS IS NOT THE END OF THE GAME, IT'S MERELY THE BEGINNING.

the use of a scouting camera will increase your success 10 fold in most cases. Trail cameras should be used, and monitored with the same wind conditions as you would hunt in. This minimizes the potential of blowing any deer out in nearby bedding or staging areas. Once the reconnaissance on your trail cameras has located some

potential harvestable animals, stand/blind locations are critical for maximizing your shooting time.

Here are three scenarios for hunting late season food sources for stand/blind locations:

This tree stand is all I've got:

If you are a diehard and only hunt out of tree stands, hats off to you tough as nails men and women. The location of the stand and your "90%" wind direction will ultimately rule where you will set up. Getting as close to the edge of the food source as possible with great back cover as not to silhouette

you in the skyline is key. I typically locate my stands 20-30 yards off of the "highway" trails that deer leave when coming from bedding/staging areas and heading to food

sources. This stand location is typically an evening sit. With wind in your favor, and a properly positioned stand, it's only a matter of time.

"Hay" a blind:

With the recent advancements in hay bale style blinds, looking the part in the field has been made easier. If you are hunting in



a field that has hay bales in them, or even corn stubble bales, positioning yourself amongst them is a no brainer. If the bales have left the field, don't worry this tactic may still work. If you don't have a hay bale blind, making your pop up blind look like one is not that hard, but should be done prior to getting into the field. Most pop up blinds have straps or holes that you can shove items like corn stalks, grasses etc. into them to help cover them up and disguise them. Another option if sitting in the middle of the field all alone isn't appealing to you, is to locate your blind on the edge of the cover, just as you would with a tree stand, making sure that you are "grassed in" will increase your chances of not being noticed.

Ground & Pound:

So, you don't have a tree stand or a pop up blind, no biggie, Mother Nature is to the rescue. Building a make shift ground blind is easier than you think. During the mid-morning/day lull, with wind in your favor, harvesting downed trees, cutting cedars, etc. and building an impromptu ground blind can be just as effective, and in some cases better than other options. The use of a tarp or landscaping fabric to keep wind down can help as well. When constructing the blind evaluate how you will shoot out of

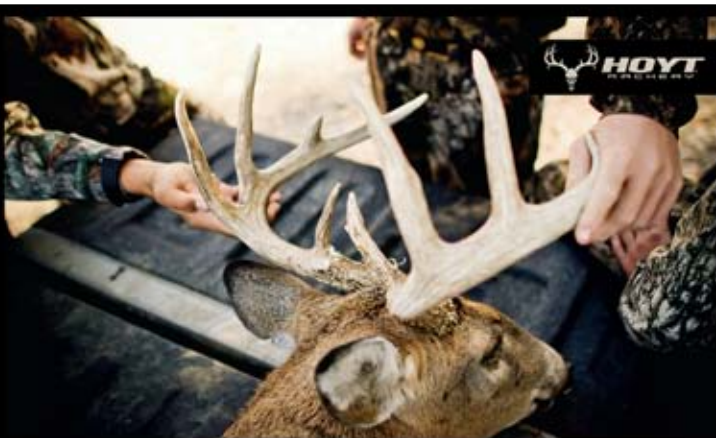
it, whether on your knees or from a chair, in order to position your window locations properly. Again, you are hunting as close to the food source as possible without interrupting the bedding/staging areas.

On the farms that we manage & hunt, our stands, tower blinds, and even pop-up/make shift blinds are planned well in advance, but sometimes you have to throw caution into the wind and move in a bit closer to seal the deal. It's no secret to anyone that late season hunting in Iowa is the best that there is, but it's typically the coldest time of year as well. When either putting up a pop up blind, or building a make shift blind to hunt out of on the ground, making sure that you are brushed in and protected from the elements as best as can be, will increase your time in the field, as this time of the year persistence in the field is key to harvesting an animal. The use of a small propane heater, "Heater Body Suit, cold weather gear, down blankets, and cases of "HotHands" will increase your time out.

In addition to hunting over food sources, the use of a decoy in the field can increase your possibility of success as well. I have seen firsthand the amount of success that hunters continue to have with the use of decoys in food plots, most recently this season by my hunting partners Kiley & Mike

who harvested these two bucks while sitting on their food plots on a farm they call the "Micca" and using a decoy in western Iowa.

There is just something about a deer standing in a food plot that gets the rest of the deer moving. The position and location of the decoy in regards to your stand location makes the world of difference. When using a buck decoy, I typically place it 20-30 yards up wind of my stand/blind location, but always facing me, quartering either right or left depending on which hand you shoot with and location of trails entering the field. I try to find the highest point that I can within my 20-30 yard shooting lane so that the deer is most visible from distances that other deer may see. Typically any deer entering into the field will circle the deer to get downwind of it, the use of cover scents such as "ConQuest Herd in a Stick or Rutting Buck in a Stick" can help to ease the tension between the two. Making sure that your decoy is 100% human scent free optimizes its effectiveness. When using a doe decoy, face her away from you and use doe urine to entice those bucks. By just simply putting a decoy in the field, you are going to potentially attract some deer, but adding calls and rattles to the setup will add credibility to your setup. Don't be shy, but



WHAT DOES ZERO TORQUE MEAN TO YOU?
MORE BUCKS IN TRUCKS.

EVERY COMPETING BOW EVER BUILT HAS SUFFERED FROM ONE OR MORE OF THESE TORQUE, MORE SPECIFICALLY TORQUE WORKS INTO THE AREA FROM CABLE TENSION THROUGH THE CABLE GUARD, EVEN FLEXIBLE CABLE GUARDS ARE QUALITY BUT THE ALL-METAL TRUCK MOUNTED ZERO TORQUE SYSTEM PARTIALLY ELIMINATES THE BOW'S LOAD TORQUE THAT THE CABLES APPLY TO THE RISER AS THE BOW IS DRAWN, BRING YOU TO AID ALIGNMENT AND EASY TUNING, NOT TO MENTION A MORE ACCURATE, CONSISTENT TRIGGER AND HARBOR-HITTING SHOTS. IN OTHER WORDS MORE BUCKS ON YOUR TRUCK. THE ALL-NEW CARBON SPECTER ZT AND NITRUM ZERO ARE THE ONLY BOWS THAT HAVE IT AND BOTH ARE ONLY AVAILABLE AT A HOYT DEALER. GET SERIOUS. GET HOYT.

HOYT
 GET SERIOUS. GET HOYT.

ZERO
 THE BOWS SYSTEM

350
 AVAILABLE

CARBON SPECTER ZT

NITRUM Z

Palo Outdoors
 1204 1st Street
 Palo, IA 52324
 319-851-5290
www.palo-outdoors.com

No Limits Outdoors
 212 11th St. SW Plaza
 Spencer, IA 51301
 712-580-7000
www.nolimitsspencer.com

R & R Sports
 2014 N 2nd St.
 Clinton, IA 52732
 563-243-4696
www.randrsportsinc.com

Anthem Archery
 1718 Moellers Dr #B
 Decorah, IA 52101
 563-382-4755
www.anthemarchery.com

Fin & Feather
 125 Hwy 1 W
 Iowa City, IA 52246
 319-354-2200
www.finfeather.com

don't go crazy. When the wind is blowing, take a break, when it's quite, get noticed!

GET TO GETTIN':

When the snow hits the ground, and you're running out of time, dress warm and go after them. There is something to be said about this style of hunting and it's not for all, but when done properly it's proven deadly for decades. Remember this, at the end of those tracks there is an animal, getting to them unnoticed is the only thing that stands in your way.

Knowing a buck track and a doe track in the snow is a starter. Tracks around 3 inches or larger with dewclaws outside of the hoof print is a buck, anything less without visible dewclaws is a doe. Finding a fresh track is instrumental to your success, knowing what "fresh" means is up for debate. When hunting, anything that looks recent, whether from the night before or just laid is fresh, even if you didn't see they animal walk down that path. Knowing the direction of the traveling deer is half the battle, now it's the pursuit.

When stalking a deer, and I've only done this a handful of times successfully, speed is the name of the game. Once I start on a track the only things that I am focusing on are the wind direction, track direction and what is in front of me down the path. Knowing the terrain and keeping wind in my face are my number one concerns. Don't hesitate during the pursuit granted the chances of jumping or spooking a deer are highly possible, this is not the end of the game, it's merely the beginning. If you do stumble upon a deer and you don't have a chance at a shot, take a break, noting the direction and travel path of that animal, and re-group. Give that deer ample amount of time to calm down and possibly feed or bed again, then start your pursuit again.

One thing that I am always conscience of

is our bedding locations on our properties. We typically do not enter these locations ever unless making adjustments to them during the spring, or we have a shot/dead deer that entered into these locations, and then all circumstances are weighed prior to entering them. This is just how we operate and have had success in doing so, but this option needs scrutinized when in pursuit of game using the tracking/stalking methods.

This same style of hunting can be equally as effective when trying to head off an animal leaving the food sources, typically in the early morning hours. Getting out and on your feet well before day break, and located with wind in your favor to a location that you can monitor the deer in the fields between them and their travel corridors is the name of the game. Noting the typical travels patterns of animals will help you be successful, but watching which way they are headed and getting between them in a hurry is the goal as most deer will switch up travel patterns depending on conditions or other deer movements. By now the rut is over and the main focus is food, your mentality has to be that you are going to do whatever it takes to get between that deer, the food and his home.

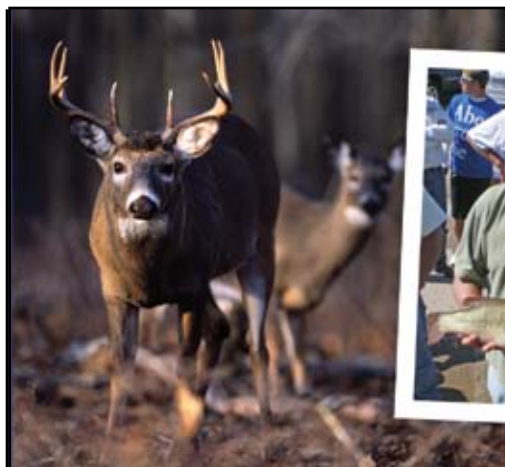
IT'S NOW OR NEVER, I'M ALL IN:

Pay no attention to what I said earlier about not going into bedding areas, you've got a world class whitetail that has been eluding you all season and you have decided you're going in. This last ditch effort to harvest that whitetail that only dreams are made of can either make or break your hunting season, but you've weighed the options and your mind is set. Get up an hour before you think you need to, and get to your location, whether you have a stand, a blind, or you are going to sit this one out, just get there and relax, but be ready.

By this point in the season, this buck you have been chasing is on to you, he's either seen you, smelled you or all of the above. He's worn down and has been pressured for months to no end, the light is at the end of the tunnel for him, but you have other plans. Getting situated well before the deer are going to move in the morning from the food source to the bedding area has to be your main focus. The conservation of energy during these bitter cold months means that deer are going to bed closer to the food sources. A travel plan has to take all of this into account when deciding to infiltrate his territory without spooking or alarming any other deer at the same time. This is tricky but it can be done. You may need to enter into an area that you are not all that familiar with a good distance from where the deer are, keeping quiet and being stealthy are a must.

Now that you have gotten to a point between the deer and what you think is their bedding area, be patient as during these last few days, the temps and snow cover may keep them feeding longer than you had anticipated. During this time, monitoring the wind and possibly slight adjustments to your location can seal the deal or break the bank. You made it this far, and you have nothing else to lose, stay calm and put the hammer down.

With just days left in the season and the hours rapidly flying by, it's now or never. Hopefully these scenarios may prove to be successful for you this season. When weighing all of the options, you need to ask yourself, "am I hunting to fill the freezer, or mount a booner?" as your tactics may change. Be prepared to sit in the cold for long hours, dress warm, pack a lunch, stay safe, wear your harness, let others know where you will be hunting and stay focused. You are the key to your success, make it count. Stay calm and hunt on!



MISSISSIPPI RIVER | CEDAR RIVER | DEEP LAKES PARK

MUSCATINE
IOWA VisitMuscatine.com

MULTIPLE HUNTING LOCATIONS