

Learn to Hunt Deer

Hunter Responsibility and Ethics

What are ethics?

- Branch of philosophy that deals with decision making
- Behaviors considered "ethical" vary with time, place, and culture
- An ethical behavior is what you do when no one else is watching

Elements in Ethical Decision Making

- Intuition- what is your "gut feeling"?
- Common social practice
- Tradition
- Law
- Teachings of religion/faith

The Boone and Crockett Club defines the taking of any free-ranging, wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals as "fair chase". Fair chase is also characterized as "responsible, ethical, and sustainable use hunting".

Legal versus Ethical:

- Society's expectations:
 - Be safe and obey the law
 - Retain "fair chase"
 - Respect the quarry (humane kills, retrieve wounded animals, fully utilize harvested animals, etc.)
 - Respect the rights of landowners, other hunters, and the public
 - Respect the non-hunting public
- Can a legal activity be unethical?
 - Shooting an animal beyond your personal comfort zone is legal, but unethical
 - Shooting a deer in the rump is legal, but unethical

Group discussion:

While laws and ethics may seem black and white on paper, in the field the decisions we make are often complex. The following scenarios describe situations where hunters are forced to make difficult decisions. What could they do? What should they do?

Scenario 1:

Some waterfowl and dove hunters use robotic decoys that feature moving wings to better attract ducks into shooting range. Is "gadgetry" unethical?

Scenario 2:

Two hunters are exiting the woods after their morning hunt and encounter two locked bucks fighting in a stream. They are each interlocked with the other, their antlers tangled. While one hunter films the action, his partner approaches within range and shoots one of the bucks. The buck dies in seconds. They later return to shoot the other deer. Both bucks were tagged and then separated. Is this fair chase? Should the hunters have attempted to free the bucks first?

Scenario 3:

You accidentally shoot two turkeys with one shot while hunting in an area that only allows one turkey to be taken each day. Both birds fall dead in plain view. It is illegal to possess two birds in one day. It's also illegal to waste a bird by leaving it. What will you do?

Which ethical principles are most important to you?