

HUNTER ETHICS

Goal: To promote hunter responsibility for hunting laws, activities, wildlife and resources.

Lesson 1: What Are Hunter Ethics?

Objectives

In this lesson you will:

- Describe hunter ethics.
- State the role of hunter ethics.

Webster's Dictionary defines ethics as the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group. An ethical person knows the difference between what is good and bad, and feels a moral duty and obligation to behave according to ethical principles.

Description of Hunter Ethics

Hunter ethics is a code of conduct every hunter lives by when hunting. Hunters create this personal code of conduct when they are introduced to hunting and continue to develop it throughout their lifetimes. Hunters abide by their code of conduct for right and wrong in all aspects of their lives.

“Respect” and “responsibility” are the keys to ethical hunting.

Ethical hunters care deeply about the hunting heritage in



Definition of ETHIC

eth-ic

noun ('e•thik)

1 the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation

**2 a : a set of moral principles : a theory or system of moral values
b) the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group
c) a guiding philosophy**



Ethical hunters practice good sportsmanship, support wildlife conservation and promote land stewardship.

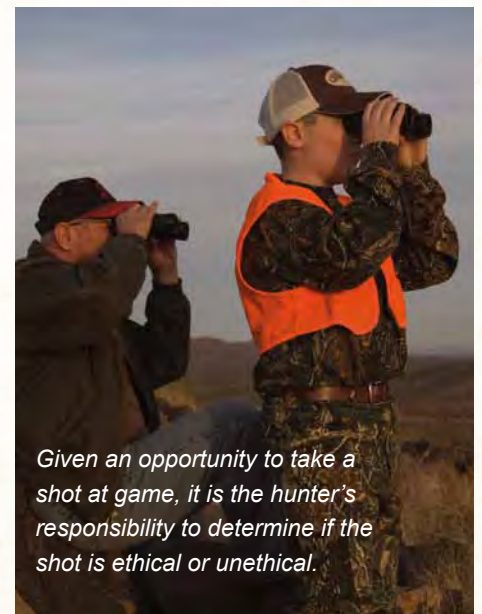
North America and about the great diversity of wildlife and their habitats. They practice good sportsmanship, support wildlife conservation and promote land stewardship.

Ethical hunting concerns fair chase. Fair chase balances the skills and equipment of the hunter with the abilities of the animal to escape.

Given an opportunity to take a shot at game, it is the hunter's responsibility to determine if it is an ethical or unethical shot.

For example, it would be unethical to shoot waterfowl on a lake or river without having a boat

or a retriever to collect the downed birds. Also, it would be unethical to hunt deer in the later part of the afternoon and not bring a flashlight



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to use in tracking the blood trail of a deer after dark. And, it would be unethical to take a shot at a squirrel when only the squirrel's rear legs are visible.

On the other hand, an ethical quail hunter would flush a quail and shoot it in range.



Fair chase shows respect for other people and wildlife.

Responsible hunters do not take unfair advantage of game animals because it is unethical and creates a poor hunter image.

Fair chase shows respect for other people and wildlife. People who don't hunt but approve of it expect hunters to practice fair chase.

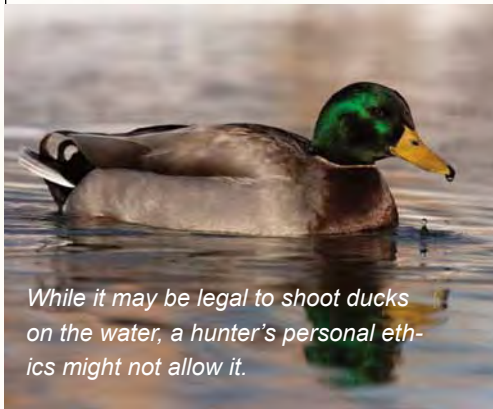
Because hunter ethics is a personal code of conduct that hunters enforce on themselves, there is no one best code but instead a great diversity of ethical hunting practices. What is legal and customary hunting in one state or province may not be in another area.

For example, hunting deer with dogs in many southern states is legal and ethical, but in New England states it is illegal. Likewise, hunting with a crossbow may be legal in one state or province, but not in another.

Because hunter ethics is a personal code of conduct that hunters enforce on themselves, there is no one best code but instead a great diversity of ethical hunting practices. What is legal and customary hunting in one state or province may not be in another area.

Also, though a particular hunting practice is legal, one hunter may judge it to be ethical while another hunter may believe it is unethical. This is due to differing personal codes. Hunters should recognize that personal preferences for ethical hunting behavior vary widely in our hunting community. They should appreciate that people do things differently depending on where they come from, and that's okay.

For instance, it may be legal and ethical to bait deer, but an individual hunter's personal ethics would not allow the pursuit of deer with bait. In the same way, it may be legal to shoot ducks on the water, but a hunter's personal ethics might not allow it.



While it may be legal to shoot ducks on the water, a hunter's personal ethics might not allow it.

Plus, over time hunting laws and regulations change to provide the best outcomes for wildlife management. This may lead to hunters using different equipment, the most modern hunting techniques and to adopt new

A Hunter's Code of Conduct

- Learn and practice safe hunting techniques and know the capabilities and limitations of your firearm. Don't shoot beyond your personal ability.
- Select a single game animal as a target and positively identify your target before pulling the trigger.
- Make every effort to retrieve and use harvested game. When hunting with dogs, they should remain under the control of their handlers at all times.
- Obey and support wildlife laws and report violations. Be familiar with limits before going in the field. Do not shoot game to fill another hunter's limit. Party shooting is illegal.
- Pick up your empty shell casings or other trash and dispose of it properly. Retrieve all your gear at the end of each hunt day.
- Avoid knowingly interfering with another hunter and respect the right of others to lawfully share the outdoors.
- Be especially respectful and friendly to nonhunters you encounter. Establishing and maintaining good relationships can help prevent future conflicts.
- Share the fun and camaraderie

codes of conduct. Hunter ethics is a personal choice to do the right thing: hunt safe and legal.

The Role of Hunter Ethics in Hunting

The role of hunter ethics in the hunting tradition is to ensure that public perception of hunting continues to be positive and approving.

The purpose of today's hunting laws is not to restrict freedom or make hunting difficult. Hunters and other conservation-minded

citizens work continuously with legislators to establish hunting laws to protect hunting traditions, conserve wild game, promote hunter safety and to keep the privilege to hunt and harvest game.

The best way for hunters to help uphold hunting as a valued tradition is to hunt responsibly.



Greatest Threat to Hunting in North America

What is the greatest threat to hunting in North America?

The answer is not antihunters.

Out of the total North American population, only a small percentage of people (5 to 8 percent) are antihunters.

However, only an equally small percentage of people are hunters.

The great majority of

The majority of people in North America approve of hunting especially when a game animal is harvested to provide food for the table.



The greatest threat to hunting in North America is hunters who create a negative hunter image by poor behavior in the field—through illegal, unsafe and unethical hunting.

people are nonhunters. They simply do not want to hunt. They don't have a negative attitude about hunting, and they are not trying to abolish hunting.

In fact, surveys consistently show the majority of people in North America approve of hunting, especially when a game animal is harvested to provide food for the table. However, they strongly disapprove of bad hunting behavior, such as killing game animals for no use of the meat, hide, feathers, etc. Support for hunting from nonhunters (and even other hunters) decreases when hunters behave in unsafe or unethical ways when hunting.

The greatest threat to hunting in North America is hunters who create a negative hunter image by poor behavior in the field—through illegal, unsafe and unethical hunting.

Examples of poor hunter behavior include:

- Trespassing on private property.
- Hunting a property without permission from the landowner.
- Taking game before or after legal hunting hours or season dates.
- Possession of the incorrect firearm or ammunition for the species hunted.
- Taking more game than allowed by law.

Examples of bad hunting-related activities include:

- Bragging about the animals killed.
 - Leaving trash in the hunting area.
 - Not closing gates on private property.
 - Driving on wet and muddy roads, making them impassible by other users.
 - Intruding on another hunter's area.
 - Setting up treestands or blinds where they may disturb neighboring landowners or other hunters.
 - Wearing dirty hunting clothing in public.
 - Mixing hunting with drinking alcohol—for example, celebrating at the roadside.
- The above activities may be legal, but they show disrespect to nonhunters and hunters alike. These are examples of "slob" hunting. They give all hunters a poor image, and they occur too

- Shooting in the direction of a person, building or livestock within range.

All of the above activities are illegal and unsafe.

A “poacher” is someone who hunts or fishes illegally. When caught by law enforcement, poachers will usually lie about the act, denying they did it or tell a false story of what happened.

If you make a mistake while hunting, admit it to yourself and also to a law enforcement officer who may charge you with a hunting violation.

Also, the behaviors and attitudes of hunters when not actually hunting may give hunters a poor image.

First Come—First Served

Ethical hunters respect the “first come—first served” courtesy when two or more hunters arrive at the same area. For instance, one hunter may have placed a treestand or blind at a location the previous day, but when arriving to hunt the next day finds another hunter already setup. “First come—first served.” If that happens to you, wish for better luck next time, arrive earlier or find another hunting area.



If you arrive at a treestand and find someone already set up, remember the rule first come—first served and find another hunting area.

All hunters should avoid confronting other hunters, nonhunters and antihunters. Firearms are usually involved in hunting situations. As tempers get hotter, someone could make a bad decision. Behavior that intimidates, threatens, is disorderly, or is a physical assault can lead to a citation, arrest and imprisonment. Someone could get hurt. If a hunting situation becomes offensive or confrontational, leave the area and report the incident to law enforcement.

The best time to decide to be an ethical hunter is before hunting! Decide to be SAFE, LEGAL and RESPONSIBLE. Don't be a slob or a poacher. Don't cause danger to the hunting tradition by hunting unethically.

Taking Responsibility and Showing Respect

Begin developing your ideas of right and wrong behavior for hunting or hunter ethics by adopting these principles.

As an ethical hunter, I will:

- Know and obey the laws and regulations for hunting.
- Show respect for myself and other people, including landowners, other hunters and nonhunters.
- Show respect for all wildlife and the environment that sustains them.



- Take responsibility for my actions.
- Report vandalism, hunting violations or poaching to law enforcement officials.
- Actively support legal, safe and ethical hunting.
- Insist upon legal, safe and ethical hunting by other hunters.