

PUBLIC IMAGE OF HUNTERS AND HUNTING

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

Lesson 1: Public Image of Hunting and Hunters

Objectives

In this lesson you will:

- Explain how hunter behavior contributes to the public image of hunting.
- Explain how the public image of hunting may be different from the public image of hunters.
- Explain how the behavior of hunters will influence the future of the hunting tradition.

Legal Regulated Hunting

Federal and state laws and regulations control all aspects of hunting in North America. Hunters take to the fields and woods to take wild game animals during legal, regulated hunting seasons.

Hunters do not poach or engage in other illegal and unethical behavior when hunting. They have a personal code of conduct for hunting—and they live by it.

Poachers

A “poacher” kills or takes wild animals illegally. A poacher does not care about hunting laws and regulations.

Hunters are not poachers.

When caught by law enforcement, a poacher faces arrest, suspension of their hunting license, and confiscation of any personal property associated with the hunting incident.

Slob Hunters

A “slob hunter” may hunt legally, but behaves unethically. A slob hunter will take bad shots at game, leave trash in the woods or fields, damage habitat, vandalize signs, and show disrespect toward natural resources, landowners, other hunters and nonhunters.

Hunters are not slob hunters.

A small percentage of people who hunt wild game are poachers and slobs, yet it is the behavior of these few individuals that most seriously affects public opinion about all hunters.

Who Hunts?¹

For the 18.6 million Americans age 16 and older who hunted between 2002 and 2006, hunting is an important and traditional recreational activity. Hunting brings families and friends together for wholesome enjoyment and responsible use of wildlife and habitat.

The men, women and youth who hunt are among the chief supporters of responsible wildlife management and conservation practices. Through hunting license purchases and excise taxes paid on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, hunters and target shooters fund wildlife conservation and habitat improvements. As a



Real hunters are not slobs, and they don't leave trash behind.

A national survey of hunting activity in the United States in 2006 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revealed the following facts:

- 12.5 million people 16 and older hunted a variety of animals in 2006.
- 10.7 million hunters pursued big game, such as deer and elk
- 4.8 million hunted small game, including squirrels and rabbits
- 2.3 million hunted migratory birds, such as doves or waterfowl
- 1.1 million hunted other animals

result, hunters have helped restore populations of deer, turkeys, ducks, elk and antelope to record numbers.



Each year hunters in the United States contribute more than \$25 billion to the nation's economy and support over a half million jobs.

According to a report submitted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, hunters contribute \$25 billion in retail spending annually and support 593,000 jobs.

U.S. HUNTING FACTS

- 12.5 million hunters
- \$24.7 billion retail sales
- \$66 billion in overall economic output
- \$20.9 billion salaries and wages
- 593,000 jobs
- \$4.2 billion in state and local taxes
- \$5 billion in federal taxes

Hunters also provide food for their families and friends and for

75 percent of United States citizens support hunting.

81 percent believe hunting should continue as a legal activity.

people who are less fortunate through donations to programs such as "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" and "Hunters for the Hungry."

What Do People Say About Hunting?

Support for legal, regulated hunting in America is strong. About 75 percent of United States citizens support hunting. An even greater number of Americans—81 percent—believe that

hunting should continue as a legal activity. People know that scientific management is necessary to maintain healthy wildlife and habitat, and that hunting is a key part of responsible wildlife management.

Americans approve of hunting for:

- Obtaining food (85%)
- Protecting humans from harm (85%)
- Controlling animal populations (83%)
- Managing wild game populations (81%)
- Protecting property (71%)
- Sporting activity (53%)



Overall, Americans have a positive opinion about legal, regulated hunting and believe that hunting should continue.

In summary, people say that hunting is good when hunters use the animals they kill for food and when hunting helps manage wildlife. The vast majority of hunters in America (95%) eat the game animals they kill.

What Do Hunters Say About Hunting?²

Why and how someone hunts may differ for any given hunt, and these preferences may change during a person's a lifetime.

Factors that change a hunter's preferences include:

- Age
- Influence from mentors
- Varied hunting experiences
- Pursuing a specific game species
- Reading about hunting adventures and techniques
- Changes in legal methods of taking game and new hunting equipment.

¹(Sources: NRA-ILA *Hunting Facts*. National Rifle Association—Institute for Legislative Action, 2004; National Shooting Sports Foundation; 2006 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2006.)

²Sources: Based on research of hunters reported in *The Hunter: Developmental Stages and Ethics*, by Bob Norton. Riverbend Publishing, 2008, 164 pp.



How and why we hunt can change from one hunt to the next and evolve over a lifetime.

Many hunters find that a day of hunting may involve one or more of the following preferences.

Shooting

A gun (or bow) is the hunter's main tool for pursuing game. Hunters feel a sense of satisfaction and responsibility when the gun performs as expected—helping to deliver a quick, clean kill. To accomplish that, practice at the shooting range is an important part of preparing for the hunt. Through practice, hunters can hone their marksmanship skills and understand their gun's ability to perform. This builds confidence in taking shots when there are safe opportunities to harvest game.

When hunting, merely taking shots for the sake of shooting the gun or bow would not be satisfying and may be unsafe or unethical.

Limiting Out

Every year wildlife managers set seasons and bag limits for game species. These wildlife harvest rules vary by the type of hunting equipment that is legal to take the different game animals. There will be seasons and limits for hunting game with rifles, shotguns, handguns, muzzleloaders and bows.

Whether or not a hunter fills his or her daily bag limit depends on several factors. For example, while on a squirrel hunt, a hunter may shoot a daily limit or he or she may be satisfied taking fewer animals or even none. The hunter's reasons for or against limiting out can vary, including simply not wanting to shoot

Practice at the shooting range is an important part of developing your shooting skills and confidence in your ability to take safe, ethical shots.



A hunter may have opportunities to fill a daily bag limit. It's also important to remember hunting is not a competition and enjoyment can't be measured by the number or size of animals taken.

anything for the day, wanting only fox squirrels, preferring a smaller or larger animal, or taking safe shots at each squirrel until reaching the bag limit before day's end.

Trophy Hunting

Hunting wild game offers many opportunities and is highly challenging. Some hunters take satisfaction in harvesting each kind of game animal in an area during the different seasons.

Another hunter may choose to harvest only one of the North American big game species every year until each one is harvested.

In addition, some hunters will hunt for years to take a particularly large game animal, such as a 6X6 bull elk or a large whitetail buck with typical or nontypical antlers.

Success with trophy hunting may involve travel to far off places, a large amount of money, and especially, refined shooting skills, because the shooting opportunities may be at long distances. Often hunters have their trophy animals mounted by a taxidermist for display in their homes.



It may take years for a hunter to take a bull elk as magnificent as this.

Method or Technique

Inventors and manufacturers continually produce different firearms, ammunition, bows and arrows for use by hunters. These new items may convince a hunter to use a new method or technique for harvesting game. Also, over time different states and provinces may change the laws and regulations for the kinds of hunting methods and implements that are legal for harvesting wildlife.

A landowner that permitted deer hunters to use shotguns only might open up the land for hunting with rifles. Hunting deer over bait may become legal in some areas. One hunter might have relied for years on “granddad’s trusty, old 30-06 bolt action rifle” for deer hunting, but may switch to a .44 magnum revolver if the state or province makes it legal to use a handgun for deer hunting.



After years of hunting big game with a rifle, a hunter may want a different kind of challenge and switch to bow-hunting.

Besides the challenges with different firearms or bows, a hunter might only “still hunt,” use only a flintlock muzzleloader, rely on a blind or treestand, or use only a hand-made long bow and arrows.

Sportsmanship

The overall goal of every hunt is to enjoy the total experience. Satisfaction for a hunter comes

For many, enjoying the company of friends and family is one of the biggest benefits of hunting.



from being outdoors, enjoying the companionship of friends and family, seeing wildlife in their natural habitats, and taking game if the opportunity arises. At the end of the day, the hunter reflects on the most important benefit—the personal enrichment that comes from practicing good sportsmanship in the field.

Yet, regardless of personal preferences for hunting, the hunter always follows safe, ethical, and legal hunting practices.

What Do People Say About Hunters?³

Hunter behavior affects what people say about hunters. More than anything else, hunter behavior will determine the future of hunting in North America.

People will not tolerate illegal and unethical hunter behavior because it risks public safety, endangers game and nongame populations and destroys habitat.

A majority of Americans (64%) believe that hunters violate hunting laws or engage in unsafe hunting practices. Half of those surveyed (50%) believe hunters drink alcohol when they are hunting.

People have negative thoughts about hunters because of what they personally observe, what they hear from others, or what they discover in the news media and other sources.



Even though most sportsmen and women hunt legally and responsibly, people who see a shot up sign may think all hunters are slobs.

The great majority of sportsmen and women hunt legally, ethically and responsibly.

However, as the saying goes: it only takes one bad apple to spoil a bushel. Reports of illegal or unethical hunter behavior quickly produce a negative public opinion of all hunters and threaten the hunting tradition.

Only good hunter behavior will make sure that hunting continues.

What to Do for the Future of Hunting?

Most Americans believe that mandatory hunter education—taking this course—will help prevent illegal and unethical hunting behavior.

Hunter Education stresses all of the important concerns people

have about hunters and hunting:

- Firearm safety
- Legal and ethical hunting practices
- Wildlife conservation principles
- Making a quick, clean kill
- Care and use of game

All hunters should have zero-tolerance of bad hunter behavior. They should report any violations to conservation law enforcement officers.

Also, all hunters should make every effort to improve their personal knowledge and skills for safe and ethical hunting.

By taking a hunter education course, you're taking the first step to preventing unsafe, illegal and unethical hunting behavior.



³Sources: Duda, Mark D. and Martin Jones. *The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation: Affirming the Role, Strength and Relevance of Hunting in the 21st Century*. Harrisonburg, VA, Responsive Management. Unpublished manuscript.



OutdoorRoadmap.com