

Humane and Ethical Shot Placement

In 3-D, the animals are usually standing broadside, and they aren't usually moving. In the field it is a different story. Knowing which shot to take and when to take it will make you an ethical and successful bowhunter. Even more important is knowing when to pass and not take the shot at all. The following tips will help you in making accurate and humane judgments on which shots to take and which ones to pass on.

It can be very tough to make a good shot decision when your adrenaline levels are going off the charts. Sometimes the window of opportunity while bow hunting is very brief and knowing when to shoot and when not to ahead of time will hasten your ability to make the right choices when time is at a minimum.

The following are different scenarios that you may expect to encounter in bowhunting deer and the factors that you will have to take into consideration.

Screened by brush

Under no circumstance should a shot be made hoping to bust through the brush with a firearm or an arrow. One little branch will deflect an arrow or bullet and change your point of impact possibly resulting in a wounded animal. This is a shot to pass and wait for the deer to walk into a clearing for a better-shot opportunity. One helpful tip is to pre-scout your areas and cut clear shooting lanes for better shot opportunities.

Frontal shot

The frontal shot is risky. Yes you can kill a deer with a frontal shot with a bow, but the odds are against you. The chances of hitting the rib cage bone and deflecting the arrow are great and taking out enough vitals for a quick and humane kill are against you. This is a shot to wait on until the animal turns broadside for a better killing shot.

Straight Down Shot

An animal can be taken by a straight down shot but this is a marginal shot at best. The best case scenario on a straight down shot is to hit the spine, or one lung. This however requires perfect shot placement and the target area is very small and very unforgiving of shot error. I would rather wait until the animal passes a short distance and turns somewhat for a better angle shot into the vitals.

Rear shot

The rear shot is an irresponsible shot that should never be taken with a bow. Yes there are stories of hunters taking animals with this shot when the femoral artery has been severed with the animal dropping quickly after the shot but the norm for this shot is wounding the animal with a small chance for a quick recovery.

Moving shots

There is a saying that many things can happen on a moving shot and none of them are good. This is of course very true. Instead of trying to calculate a lead while your adrenaline surges through you like high voltage current it is best to try to stop the deer instead. This can be done by a grunt call, a whistle, or even yelling "Hey!". This is often all that is needed to stop a deer but you will need to be at full draw to be able to take the shot when he stops.

Quartering away

Quartering away shots are good shot opportunities for taking deer in a quick and humane manner. This is a shot of angles. Angle your shot so it enters in a straight line towards the opposite front leg of the side you're shooting on. When done right this shot will hit the vitals and dispatch the animal cleanly and quickly. However, be careful not to place the shot too far forward. At this angle you may only catch one lung and make for a difficult recovery.

Broadside

This is the shot that every deer hunter hopes for. A deer standing with an unobstructed broadside view is as good as it gets on potential shot placement on a whitetail deer. Make sure the deer is in range and center your shot just behind the front leg and below the shoulder. This shot will humanely dispatch the animal and wastes very little meat in the process.

On an animal facing to the left if the shot is high it takes out more lung or hits the spine, if it is low it takes out more of the heart, if it is to the left it breaks the shoulder and if it is right it takes part of the lung and liver. This is the shot that every ethical deer hunter should strive for. The bowhunter should avoid hitting the shoulder while the firearms hunter will break the animal down quickly if he hits the shoulder, there will be some meat loss however.

Conclusion

Every ethical bowhunter owes it to the animal he hunts to exercise good judgment and knowledgeable shot placement. There is simply no second guessing or chance shooting when it comes to hunting. We owe it to the animal to dispatch it as quickly and humanely as we can and then utilize the animal once it is down.

Take the time to mentally imagine different shot situations and shot angles so that when it comes time in that brief time frame to make the shot on that buck of a lifetime or doe for the freezer you will know exactly when to shoot and where to shoot. It is all about shot placement.