

Scent Control for Bow Hunters

The ability to smell is an animal's keenest survival sense. Recent studies by game biologists indicate that a deer's nose is as much as 7,000 times more sensitive than yours or mine ... a nose so sensitive it is capable of detecting and identifying just a few molecules of human odor! A deer, elk, or bear might doubt what it sees or hears, but never doubts what it smells.

Smart bowhunters strive to master the fine art of scent control. They learn to hide their scent in a number of time-tested ways and also develop skill at luring in animals with carefully distributed commercial concoctions. By fooling an animal's nose, an archer has a better chance of getting within close shooting range.

A hunter can never completely purge his body odor. Even if you wear a scent-blocking suit, cover yourself with odor-masking liquid or gel, spray yourself with scent-purging chemicals, and exercise the very best personal hygiene, you will still emit molecules of human scent. If you are walking and perspiring, this phenomenon intensifies. If you move a short distance from vehicle to tree stand, and then sit quietly, you will give off minimal amounts of odor. But in any event, an animal directly downwind is likely to smell at least a little human odor.

The first and foremost solution is anticipating and manipulating wind direction. Use a butane lighter or talcum squeeze bottle as a portable wind sock. Walk into the wind or crosswind-never with the breeze at your back. Avoid broken terrain, where air currents eddy unpredictably, and do not hunt in late morning or early evening when winds tend to falter, swirl, and switch direction. When you bowhunt from a tree, sit high (at least 20 feet up) to help keep your scent on upper-air currents that glide above ground-level animals. Such skills can help you bag a buck.

Modern archers rely on more than traditional wind control. When breezes shift unexpectedly, when cool air sinks from a tree stand toward the ground, and when a deer appears behind you with the wind in its face, you will need every high-tech edge you can get.

A combination of animal lure, like rutting elk urine, and Scent Shield spray can draw animals within bow range.

Many bowhunters wait for game in trees, but fail to realize how important it is not to leave human scent trails to and from their stands. Wearing ordinary leather or fabric footwear almost certainly leaves lingering scent on grass, bushes, and the ground itself. A deer that appears even two or three hours later can smell where you passed; the critter will run like a scalded cat.

There are three ways to eliminate human scent trails to and from your stand. First, wear calf-high or hip-high all-rubber boots, or at the very least, half-rubber pac boots. Second, wear Scent-Blocker Pants as an added barrier to escaping human odor. Finally, spray your lower body with a proven scent-destroyer like Scent Shield. All three techniques effectively block human odor from the ground, allowing deer, bear, and other keen-nosed critters to pass by unalarmed minutes after you climb your tree.

Head-to-toe scent suits help. Fabric in such suits incorporates activated carbon, which soaks up human odor like a sponge. Scent-blocking membranes are also widely used in modern bowhunting boots, hats, and gloves.

Scent Blocker Suits reduce human odor dramatically. Since most whitetail deer live in urban, suburban, or farmland areas, these animals are required to regularly smell people without having a nervous breakdown. Even when they do smell you, they think you may be the person in a distant house or car, or a farmer who walked past several hours earlier. They seldom suspect that danger is present and very close at hand.

To a lesser degree, odor-masking scents like red fox urine, natural earth, and wild grape also help to confuse deer. It's best to block most of your scent with rubber and high-tech fabric, then enhance such scent concealment with a little commercial masking fragrance.

Stand hunters have the best chance of controlling scent, because they are not hiking and working up a sweat.

Animal lures can be powerful bowhunting tools. Such lures, used in natural ways according to manufacturer's directions, can give you close shots instead of distant looks at deer.

The smart bowhunter realizes just how keen an animal's nose really is, and uses wind direction plus commercial products to fool this razor-sharp survival sense.