

After the Shot

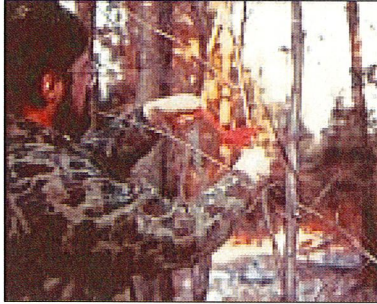
12 steps to recovering game

All hunters try for a quick, clean kill, but animals will often run after a good, fatal shot. The following advice about deer hunting can be applied to finding any animal you have shot.

Never assume you missed. Most well-placed shots will put a deer down in just a few seconds, but deer can travel hundreds of yards in that time. If there is no snow to clearly show you the tracks, it may take a while to find the deer. Here are some step-by-step hints to make the task easier.

1 Don't move. Keep quiet and follow the deer with your eyes and ears.

2 Mark your location before you move. Then mark where the deer was standing when you shot it, and also the last place you saw it. Take compass readings if necessary. Tissues make good markers (not white ones, for safety reasons), as well as surveyor's flagging. Make sure you pick them up later.



Mark your location before you move.

3 At the point of impact, deer hair and sometimes blood will help confirm where the arrow or slug hit. (Bowhunters should look beyond where the deer stood to see if the arrow passed through the body. The type of blood on the arrow provides clues. If you can't find the arrow, assume it is in the deer.) Evidence here will help you decide whether to follow immediately or to get your hunting partners for help. If you find stomach contents or intestinal fluids, for instance, wait at least a couple of hours — four hours or more is better — to avoid pushing the deer farther.

4 Look for drops of blood, tracks, or scuff marks. Mark your trail, and don't step on the signs you are following — you may want to check them later.

5 Go slowly and quietly, as though you were stalking a live deer. You may be doing just that, so keep looking ahead for the deer, not just at signs on the ground.



Blood may not always be on the ground. Look for blood on trees, grass and other plants at the height of the wound.

6 Don't look just on the ground. Look for blood on trees and other plants at the height of the

wound. Don't be discouraged if there isn't much blood. Some wounds cause internal bleeding that puts the deer down just as fast as external bleeding.

7 If leaves are dry and it's windy, you may have to turn leaves over if the blood trail is sparse. It's easier if you pay special attention to rocks, logs and tree roots — things that don't blow away.

8 Look for details. Drops hitting the ground may splash, making small "fingers" pointing in the direction of travel.

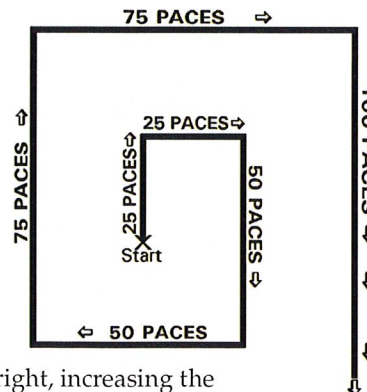


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9 On leaves that are already red you can look for the shine, feel it, or rub it with a tissue to detect blood.

10 Some surfaces soak up blood so it doesn't look red. Spray Hydrogen Peroxide or commercial blood detectors that foam when they contact blood.

11 If you lose the trail, don't give up! A systematic search often works. The "increasing L" system works well. Pace off a straight line, make a right turn, and pace off the same distance to complete the first "L." Keep turning right, increasing the distance after each two lines.



12 When you find your deer, it's eyes will be open if it is dead. Approach it from the back, and touch the eye with a stick to make sure.

Congratulations! Now it's time to fill out your tags and field dress the deer.

Lost in the Woods

how to avoid it, and what to do if it happens

Each year, New York State Forest Rangers search for over 100 lost hunters. Most of these people could have avoided this predicament with just a little better preparation. Here are some pointers:

- Learn to use a topographic map and compass, and always carry them with you. Trust your compass — many people get lost because they don't believe their compass. If you can, it helps to have a base line such as a straight road that's easy to find at the end of the day. For example, if you hunt to the south of a road that runs east-west, you know that by heading north, you will eventually come to the road.
- Carry a small flashlight and extra batteries. There is nothing more frustrating than being stuck in the dark. Even if you do have to spend the night in the woods, a flashlight will be a great help in gathering firewood and/or finding shelter. A small light with AA or smaller batteries works well, and won't give the impression you are illegally hunting deer or bear with a light.
- Bring a watch and know what time it gets dark. Cloudy days prevent you from telling time by the sun. Many people leave too little time to get out of the woods.
- Be prepared for the weather. Check the forecast before going into the woods, and then assume the worst. If it says a chance of showers, assume it will pour rain. Waterproof rain gear is a must. If it says flurries, prepare for a snowstorm. Better safe than sorry. Proper clothing can prevent hypothermia (loss of body heat) and save your life. In cold, wet weather, wear wool or synthetics. Do not wear cotton (this includes blue jeans!) — wet cotton is colder than no clothing at all, it absorbs water and drains your body heat. A hat that covers the ears is also very important in cold weather. Without one, the head and neck radiate up to forty percent of your body heat.
- Bring waterproof matches and fire starter material. If you do have to spend the night in the woods, a fire will make the difference between a tolerable experience and a nightmare. Waterproof matches work better than cigarette lighters when wet. Some lighters can be difficult to operate with cold hands. A candle makes a good fire starter.
- Bring extra food and water. Your body can't continue to exercise if you don't keep it fueled up. Becoming dehydrated or not getting enough to eat can also lead to hypothermia and/or poor judgment. If you plan on using water from streams in the woods, you will need to filter or treat it to avoid intestinal illness.
- Wear a pack to carry clothing, food and water. You will need at least a fanny pack, but a knapsack holds

more for cold weather. Remember, it's easy to stay warm when you're moving, but if you have to spend the night out you will want all the clothing you can get. Hypothermia can kill even when temperatures are above freezing. A tiny emergency "space blanket" can save your life.

- Leave word with someone about the general area you will be hunting and when you are due back. Make sure they have the phone numbers of the local Forest Ranger and the DEC emergency dispatch. (See the hunting regulations guide.) New Emergency Tool: A cell phone with a good battery can be a lifesaver if it works where you hunt.



If you get lost or injured, the most important thing is to stay calm. Remember "STOP."

S is for **Sit down**. This is the first step towards calming down.

T is for **Think**. How did I get here? How much time is left before dark?

O is for **Observe**. What mountain is that over there? Can I hear any sounds — traffic, a river, shots? Where can I find firewood and shelter?

P is for **Plan**. Do you try to make it out or to stay put at least until morning? In making this decision, consider how much easier it is to gather firewood when it is light out. The rule of thumb is to make a pile as large as you think you will need to last the night. Then make ten more just like it. Anyone who has spent all night out keeping a fire going will tell you they were surprised by how much wood they went through.

Whatever you do, do not panic! Most people think it couldn't happen to them, but we see it often. I have seen hunters who lost their guns; who ran until they were exhausted, and who tried to cross major rivers they didn't cross on the way in.

By taking a few precautions before going into the woods, you can make your time more enjoyable, and also make life much easier on the family and friends who are waiting for you to return.

