

# The Rookie Bowhunter List

## **Use the buddy system**

There is a steep learning curve to hunting. The best thing you can do is find a veteran bowhunter to be your mentor. If they hesitate at your request to tag along, offer to leave your bow at home and help pack out their game. You'll learn volumes and be ready for next year.

## **Know the rut dynamics**

Know when rut season happens for your prey. For Elk, it starts to ramp up around 2 weeks prior to the fall equinox. They will advertise themselves to females using wallows and begin to bugle, locating cows to herd. At the height of the rut, bulls will defend their cows against intruders. Knowing where they will be when is your ultimate goal.

## **Practice & Prep**

You owe it to your prey to be the best shooter you can be. Buy gear that fits you and know how to use it accurately. Tune in your bow, then practice, practice and more practice—shooting at a variety of ranges, angles and stances. If you're hunting bulls and a cow walks by within range, put your sights on her and draw without an arrow. If you're shooting a release, make sure to wedge the trigger so you don't accidentally dry fire. See how long you can hold steady. Do you shake? Did she see you draw? Where should you aim? Making screw-ups during dry runs are better than when it really counts.

## **Do your homework**

Spend as much time as you can in the off-season scouting and dissecting the countryside on topo maps and Google Earth. See how close the nearest roads are. Do outfitters guide there? Then, go there for a night or two and check it out. Is there water? Cover? Forage? If so, mark it and find some more spots.

## **Be weather-ready**

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Early fall in the mountains brings every kind of weather. Pack wool and rain gear. How hot is too hot for hunting? If you get a game animal, will it spoil before you get it out? Set limits and stick to them. Mark your weather forecasts, bring them into your master hunt plan.

## **Know how they talk**

Does your bugle push your game away or draw them in? What does a locator bugle sound like? When do you tack on grunts? If you can't answer these, keep your calls in your pocket. Learn how they talk to each other before you do more harm than good.

## **Wait**

If you're lucky enough to release a solid shot, just sit down for at least 30 minutes, an hour is better. Many times you can hear the animal fall. Other times it will bed nearby and slowly pass. The last thing you want to do is bump it.