



Rifle Hunters

Rifle hunters routinely make up 50 to 60 percent of our black bear clients every year. Our stands and blinds for rifle hunters are usually situated so that the shot offered will be between 30 and 75 yards. In one or two locations, due to the terrain and position of the bait site, this may be closer to 100 yards, but this would be the maximum distance that a hunter may be required to shoot.

The Manitoba hunting regulations recommend a minimum centerfire caliber greater than .23 caliber be used for big game and prohibit the use or possession of full metal cased hard point bullets, including FMC, FMJ and TMC. On our black bear hunts we recommend a minimum of .30 caliber cartridges such as the .30-06 or .308 Winchester with a heavy for caliber premium quality bullet such as the Nosler Partition or Accubond, Swift A-Frame, North Fork, or Remington Core-Lokt.

Shotguns may be used to hunt big game and must be a minimum of 20 gauge and shoot a single projectile (slug). The magazine of a shotgun used for big game does not have to be plugged or altered to restrict the number of shells. If a shotgun is used for black bear hunting we recommend the Brenneke Black Magic and Light Field Magnum slugs.

Hunters should remember that black bear hunting over bait is done at relatively close range and using bullets designed for deer hunting at high velocity can be a recipe for disaster. Heavy for caliber controlled expanding bullets at moderate velocity are preferred as they provide predictable performance with deep penetration through heavy muscle and bone. A complete pass through with a large exit hole is desirable.

Good quality scopes are the norm these days and they do help with precise shot placement and their light gathering ability is a definite asset at dusk. One problem that crops up repeatedly is hunter using too much scope. High magnification is not needed for hunting over bait and has resulted in many lost opportunities for hunters as well as poor shot placement.

It does not matter how many times we tell hunters to keep their variable scopes at a low power setting, people either ignore our advice or forget to check their scope setting. Your field of view is greatly diminished at higher power settings and hinders many hunters in quickly finding the bear in their scope and placing the crosshairs on the right spot for a fast, humane kill.

You do not need magnification higher than 2 or 3 power when hunting over bait, where your shots will seldom be further than 50 yards and usually much closer. A variable scope in the 1.5-5 or 2-7 range is ideal. If you have a 3-9 variable put it on 3 and leave it there.

In recent years we have had a chance to play with scopes equipped with an illuminated reticle. After using them in the field on many occasions we can say that they do offer a distinct advantage to black bear hunters, allowing them to precisely place their shot on a black bear in the dark background or a forest clearing at dusk.

If you do not currently own a scope with an illuminated reticle it is certainly not an absolute necessity, but if you have been thinking about getting one I do encourage you to have a closer look at them. Of the scopes we have tried so far our favorites are the Trijicon Accupoint and the new Leupold FireDot.

Hunters may not have or carry a loaded firearm in or on any vehicle or discharge a firearm from any vehicle. Vehicle includes a car, truck powerboat or off highway vehicle such as an ATV or UTV. A rifle or shotgun is considered loaded if it has a live shell or cartridge in the chamber, attached magazine or loading mechanism. Cartridges in a detached magazine or 'clip' are permissible.

A hunter orange garment and hat must be worn by any person who is hunting, dressing or retrieving a big game animal or coyote or by any person accompanying or assisting a person hunting big game or coyote.

The hat must be solid hunter orange except that it may have a crest or logo not exceeding 78-sq. cm (12-sq. in.) provided that it does not completely cover the hunter orange on the side where the crest or logo is affixed.

The outer garment must consist of not less than 2,580-sq. cm (400-sq. in.) of hunter orange material, above the waist and visible from all sides. Hunter orange body camouflage is legal if the hunter orange portion meets the above requirement. The remaining outer clothing color is optional.

Wolf and coyote hunters are exempt in hunting areas while no other big game season is on. Black bear hunters are exempt during the spring season.