

## **HUNT DESCRIPTIONS**

*\*All hunts are guided. For tag, drawing dates and other specifics, please see the following documents on our web site: Hunt Program Summary and Hunt Plan. Details such as dates, number of hunts, hunters, etc. in this document are subject to change year to year.*

## **BULL HUNTS**

Our bull hunts are structured so that we do not over harvest trophy size bulls each year. This allows our bulls to fully mature and to pass on their genes over a long life span. This helps to create an elk herd with a diverse age structure amongst the bulls, plenty of 300 inch plus trophy bulls, and a terrific chance at a once in a life-time 350 inch plus bull for those that are lucky enough to draw one of our unrestricted hunts.

In order to manage the herd in this way, our bull hunts are labeled a Trophy hunt or a Management hunt. If this were public property and tags issued by CPW, in order to accomplish a high bull to cow ratio with plenty of trophies, there would be fewer tags issued. For example, we have 12 to 14 bull hunts on our property each year. If all of those hunts were Trophy hunts, then after a few years there would be few Trophies on the property. If it was public land, instead of 12 to 14 tags issued, there might be 3 to 6 and hope for 50% success or 50% of bulls harvested are trophies while the other 50% are younger. We could do that, but instead we offer twice as many hunts, and manage what is taken. With this model we can get more people out on an elk hunt and we are also able to harvest bulls with bad genetics, bulls that are past their prime, or bulls that are mature but will not ever be a trophy.

- **Classification of Bull Hunts**

- Each hunt is classified as a Trophy or Management Hunt each year and detailed in that year's "hunt plan"
- TROPHY:
  - Any bull is eligible for harvest
  - Targeting mature bulls that score over 300 inches.
- MANAGEMENT:
  - Likely not a trophy size bull
  - Targeting immature bulls that are not and will not become trophy bulls or mature bulls that have reached their full potential and are limited by genetics, age, or other factors.
  - Young bulls that demonstrate 'potential' to be a trophy will NOT be harvested.
  - Mature, large, trophy bulls will NOT be harvested.
  - Final determination of "management" status is made by the guide.
  - Management hunters should understand the following:
    - "Management" status is subjective. Guides have a unique understanding of what traits likely indicate a management bull in the Backcountry based on years of experience, photos, and correlated tooth aging results of past harvests.
    - The available "management" bulls can vary significantly from year to year, season to season, and week to week depending on the annual vegetation growth, rut cycle, weather, and more. Therefore, the quality of management bulls harvested will also vary season to season and year to year.

- Generally, antler characteristics such as frame, points, tine length, beam length, and age/maturity factor into the subjective measure of a trophy, potential trophy, and non-trophy/management. Generally, management harvests lack in those characteristics with age/maturity weighing in heavily. A mature bull with weak characteristics is a great management harvest.
- Management bulls can score beyond 300". However, the purpose of a management hunt is to help manage the herd and the first opportunity at a management bull that is approved by the guide should be harvested unless the guide decides against it for various reasons. The hunter should listen to the guide's opinions as to what is currently available on the property and be willing to harvest any bull the guide recommends/approves.
- If the hunter holds out for the 'exception' they are more likely not to harvest.
- Depending on annual conditions and the success of the trophy hunts earlier in the year, a Non-Trophy hunt may be upgraded to a Trophy hunt. Upgrades will occur in sequential season order. No hunter should apply for a Non-Trophy hunt with the expectation that it will be upgraded as it will be a rare occurrence.

#### **ARCHERY BULL**

- **What to Expect:**
  - Our archery hunts are a premiere hunt. The bull to cow ratio compares to the top trophy units in the state. There is a plethora of 300+ inch bulls and the chances of harvesting a 350+ bull are as good as anywhere in the state. Archery hunting is difficult, harvesting a trophy bull even more so. Multiple encounters and chances are expected, but not always on trophy bulls.
  - It is not and should not be expected to be an easy hunt. The terrain is moderate, but not easy. Some days distance walked may be under a few miles, but most days exceed five miles and some will approach 10 miles.
  - Archery experience is not necessary. However, shooting skill is obviously critically important. All hunters should be very comfortable at 40 yards and comfortable at 60 yards. You will tell us your maximum distance but we do require a demonstration of your capabilities before the hunt. Each hunter must put three arrows in the vitals of a standing elk 3D target from their stated maximum distance.
  - Hunters should also understand and practice: where to shoot/aim, when to draw and when not to draw, how to be still and invisible when set up with a caller behind you, how to walk quietly, how to judge/field score a bull (the guide won't always be next to you to tell you to shoot or not), how/when to range.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

#### **MUZZLE BULL**

- **What to Expect:**
  - The muzzle hunt may be our most sought-after hunt, and for good reason. The season typically falls in the middle of the rut. With a high bull to cow ratio the bugling is consistent and at the right times constant and amazing! There are typically multiple opportunities for stalks and set ups on trophy bulls.

- Although this hunt is typically easier than the archery hunt because the shot distances usually expand to 100 yards or more, it is still a challenging hunt as any hunt for a trophy bull elk is. The chance for the Trophy hunter to harvest a 350+ inch bull is high. However, if the hunter sets their sights on a 350+ bull or even a 330+ the hunter must realize that those bulls are difficult to harvest, even on our property. The hunter should carefully consider the odds and what they will take, and more importantly, what they will pass on. It is a risky proposition to go for a 330+ bull and the hunter must know that and be okay with the risk; success surely is not guaranteed in that situation. Even though the hunt is guided, skill of the hunter is critical. Walking quietly, being still, and of course accurate shots are important.
- Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **1<sup>st</sup> RIFLE BULL**

- **What to Expect:**
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> rifle hunt is a great hunt and great time to be on the property. The conditions can vary year to year and depend on the timing of the rut. If the rut is on time or early, 1<sup>st</sup> rifle can be slow and trophy bulls scarce. But if the rut is later, 1<sup>st</sup> season can see as much bugling activity as muzzle and archery seasons.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> RIFLE BULL**

- **What to Expect:**
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> rifle hunt changes in character year to year. Typically, elk are plentiful on the property. Usually the larger bulls are solo by this time, or with a few other bulls and spread throughout the property, recovering from the rut. If it is a Trophy hunt, the chances are high of finding a 300+ bull. Often though, 300 class bulls and below are with large herds of cows and bugling as if they are in the middle of the rut.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.
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### **3<sup>rd</sup> RIFLE BULL:**

- **What to Expect:**
  - The character of the 3<sup>rd</sup> season and 4<sup>th</sup> season hunt depends on the conditions and can be cyclical. There might be a day where there are over 40 bulls on the property but there also might be days where there seem to be no bulls on the property.
  - The Non-Trophy hunts are challenging in their own way. It is likely you will see more bulls that cannot be harvested. Finding the right bull can be challenging, but also rewarding and fun.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **4<sup>th</sup> RIFLE BULL:**

- **What to Expect:**
  - The character of the 3<sup>rd</sup> season and 4<sup>th</sup> season hunt depends on the conditions and can be cyclical. There might be a day where there are over 40 bulls on the property but there also might be days where there seem to be no bulls on the property.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **DEER HUNTS:**

- **What to Expect:**
  - Bucks move onto our property once the rut starts in mid to late November.
  - Our buck hunts are a great way to introduce a beginner to hunting. The difficulty level is typically low along with the exertion level. Most of the time is spent spotting and watching and then stalking once a buck is located.
  - While we have not harvested a giant mule deer buck yet, there are typically high-quality bucks available.

### **COW HUNTS:**

- **What to Expect:**
  - Most of our cow hunts take place in December and January. During this time of year, the cows are on and off our property. They're either there, or not there. They are typically in larger herds this time of year of 150-250.
  - Since they are there or not there, the "Rolling Hunt Opportunity" allows us to only bring hunters out when the cows are on the property or have a good chance of being on the property. We will contact hunters in order, as the opportunity arises. As hunters harvest, or get an opportunity, the next hunter in line is contacted and scheduled.
  - Since we've started the Rolling Hunt Opportunity our success rate is 100% with a harvest rate of 80%
  - Our cow hunts attempt to harvest a hand full of cows/year and give a good, fun opportunity to fill the freezer for our hunters. It's typically one morning or evening since we are waiting until the cows show up to head out.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **TURKEY HUNTS:**

- **Basics:** We typically offer 10 or more turkey hunts each spring
- **Category:** Bearded Turkey
- **What to Expect:**
  - Our turkey hunts are perfect for youth and/or beginner hunters. Typically, a lot of birds around, great gobbling action, and low exertion level.
  - Option to hunt out of a blind or set up with decoys and call out/away from a blind.
  - Turkey Hunts also utilize the "Rolling Hunt Opportunity." Hunters will not be assigned dates but will be contacted in order as previous hunters harvest. Hunts will typically be one morning or one evening.
  - Success/Harvest rates are available upon request.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

- Most of our hunts are morning/evening oriented. We do not typically stay out all day on any of our hunts. It happens on occasion because of certain circumstances but most often we hunt in the morning as long as the animals are active and then return in late afternoon/evening for the evening hunt. Those times vary with each season, length of day, weather and other factors.
- We do not walk through areas in the hopes of spotting something or bumping something. We practice spot and stalk strategy most of the time. During the elk rut, we do call, but typically not without first spotting or hearing elk.

- There are several points throughout the property we use to spot from. We drive a vehicle most often, from point to point, area to area to spot and watch. Once we spot something we move on foot and begin the stalk.
- All big game hunts require a guide, which we provide
- Turkey hunts require a guide or chaperone, which we provide
- Fees, Drawing Rules, Registration, Eligibility, and all details can be found on our website:  
[www.hrcaonline.org/BackcountryHunts](http://www.hrcaonline.org/BackcountryHunts)