

HUNT DESCRIPTIONS

**All hunts are guided. For tag, drawing dates and other specifics, please see our Rules and Regulations or document titled "Basic Information." Details such as dates, number of hunts, hunters, etc. in this document are subject to change year to year.*

***Success/Harvest Rates: A success is defined as a reasonable chance, missed shot, or wounding of an animal. Harvest is the taking of an animal. Based on statistics from 2015 to present.*

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.

BULL HUNT CATEGORIES:

1. **Unrestricted:** Any bull is eligible for harvest
2. **Restricted Trophy:** Allows for a trophy bull to be harvested, but only certain bulls (usually known bulls that we know are fully mature and/or past their prime) or a certain class of bull (an unknown bull that is obviously an older bull). More importantly, the Restricted Trophy hunt does not allow certain bulls or classes of bulls to be harvested; younger bulls with great trophy potential.
3. **Restricted:** Allows for a non-trophy type bull to be harvested. We are looking for a bull that does not have special qualities (no matter what age) and that is not and will likely never be a special, trophy bull.
4. **Management:** Allows for a bull that is not a trophy and likely never will be, preferably has undesirable genetic traits in its antlers; or a non-branched spike.

In a typical year we have 10 bull hunts. Three of those are guaranteed to be 'unrestricted': Two archery and one muzzle. The second muzzle hunt is 'restricted.' The youth, 3rd season management bull is 'management.' The 2nd 4th rifle bull is a 'management.' Those six hunts are the only guarantees each year; the rest of the hunts operate on a "Flex" system, meaning that other than the guaranteed hunts, the rest of the hunts are categorized depending upon the previous harvests, and what categories they fall under, up to that point. Typically, 1st rifle is 'unrestricted' or 'restricted trophy,' 2nd rifle is restricted, and 3rd and 4th rifle are management hunts. Those decisions are made as we move season to season and are based off of harvests up to that point from that year.

ARCHERY BULL

- **Basics:** Each year we draw two archery hunters. Each hunter gets a pre-determined 10 days to hunt, four of which are restricted to hunting out of a blind only.
- **Category:** Unrestricted
- **Success/Harvest Rates:**
 - 10 hunts 2015-2019. 9 out of 10 successful, 2 harvests.
 - Of the 9 'successful' hunts: 2 harvests, 4 wounded/not recovered, 2 miss, 1 pass,
- **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 is as good as anywhere in the state. Archery hunting is difficult, harvesting a trophy bull even more so, but as you can see from the numbers below, counting the wounded, passed on, and harvested bulls, 7 out of 10 hunts result in an opportunity at a trophy bull. 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 some days exceed five miles. Archery experience is not necessary but if you're a new archery hunter, or even experienced, practicing shooting is necessary obviously, but also understanding, practicing, and studying the following: where to shoot, when 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.
- If we included 2014 in our statistics, it would add two more harvests. Of those four harvests, scores are: 351, 300, 289, 210.
- The four wounded scores are: 330+, 330+, 335, 300+
- The 1 pass was on a 300+ bull
- Shot distances were (in yards): 18, 30, 10, 40, 45, 45, 30, 40, 20

MUZZLE BULL

- **Basics:** The muzzle loader hunters are drawn at our annual Banquet. One person is drawn and gets to pick a 'buddy' to hunt with them. The hunters get the entire nine day season.
- **Category:** One Unrestricted, one Restricted
- **Success/Harvest Rates:**
 - 9 total hunts, 7 harvests, 9 successes.
 - Of the two non-harvests, one was wounded, one passed on 280 inch bull.
- **What to Expect:**
 - The muzzle hunt may be our most sought-after hunt, and for good reason. The hunt typically falls in the middle of the rut when things really get going. 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 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 bull elk is. There will be multiple instances where the elk win; but the great part about hunting private property is there will usually be other opportunities. The chance for the Unrestricted hunter to harvest a 350+ inch bull is probably the best.
 - Scores of the seven harvests: 365, 358, 343, 310, 280, 265, 260. The 260 was the 2019 restricted bull, which was a new rule beginning in 2019. The top two scores have been in the last two years.
 - The one wounded bull was a 330+ and passed bull was 280.
 - Shot distances were: 50, 25, 90, 50, 45, 25, 80, 150, 50

1st RIFLE BULL

- **Basics:** One person is drawn. The hunter gets the entire season.

- **Category:** Flex; it can be anything from Unrestricted to Management and depends on the archery and muzzle harvests up to that point.
- **Success/Harvest Rates:**
 - Out of five hunts since 2015, all have been successful and harvested
- **What to Expect:**
 - The 1st rifle hunt is a great hunt and odds of shooting a trophy bull are high. The character of the 1st rifle hunt does change year to year. Some years, the elk have been bugling and displaying high rut activity. Other years 1st rifle experiences a post rut lull where the bigger bulls seem to disappear and finding elk becomes difficult.
 - In a typical year we expect our first rifle hunt to 'Flex' to a "Restricted Trophy" hunt meaning a couple of the previously identified 330 plus bulls will be harvestable, but only certain ones that we know are past their prime, along with other, smaller trophy size bulls that are also of a certain size class and age class. Limiting the opportunities to certain bulls, or a certain class of bulls does increase the difficulty level of the hunt. Passing on a 250-280 bull in order to hold out for a certain trophy bull is not recommended and could result in the hunter not harvesting.
 - Shot distances have all been less than 250 yards.
 - Scores of the bulls harvested since 2015: 270, 340, 310, 390, 310.
 - A 350 was also harvested in 2014.

2nd RIFLE BULL

- **Basics:** One person is drawn. The hunter gets the entire season
- **Category:** Flex; it can be anything from Unrestricted to Management and depends on the harvests of all of the previous hunts up to that point.
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Out of six hunts since 2015, all have been successful and harvested.
- **What to Expect:**
 - The 2nd rifle hunt also 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. 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.
 - In a typical year now, we expect the 2nd rifle hunt to 'Flex' to a "Restricted" hunt but in years past it has 'Flexed' to a "Unrestricted" hunt. As our management continues to increase the number of trophy bulls on the property, there is a good possibility we will be able to harvest more trophies and in the future there is a good possibility this hunt becomes a "Restricted Trophy" hunt. It is important to keep in mind there are five hunts before this one though and the "flex" depends on what's harvested in those five previous hunts; it's very difficult to guess. We need a few more years under the current system to better predict what this hunt might "flex" to.
 - If you are a hunter who desires to shoot a trophy bull; this may not be the hunt for you. The past two years this hunt has "flexed" to a "Restricted" hunt. We expect that trend to continue.
 - If you are a hunter who is going to approach the 2nd rifle hunt as wanting to shoot the biggest bull possible, even if it's a "Restricted" hunt; this hunt is probably not the right one for you.
 - If you are a hunter who either just wants meat and would be happy with an average 5x5 bull or smaller, or a beginner hunter who is excited to harvest their first bull elk, then this hunt is definitely for you.

- Scores of bulls harvested since 2015: 280, 363, 320, 373, 220, 230

3rd RIFLE BULL:

- **Basics:** One person is drawn. The hunter is restricted to 3 or 4 days and may share the property with a youth deer hunter.
- **Category:** Flex; it can be anything from Unrestricted to Management and depends on the harvests of all of the previous hunts up to that point.
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Of the six hunts since 2015, all were successful, four of six harvested.
- **What to Expect:**
 - Typically 3rd season will be a “Restricted” or “Management” hunt. It will be rare for this hunt to ‘Flex’ to a “Restricted Trophy” or “Unrestricted” hunt.
 - If you are a hunter who either just wants meat and would be happy with an average 5x5 bull or smaller, or a beginner hunter who is excited to harvest their first bull elk, then this hunt is definitely for you.
 - The 3rd season hunter should also be happy to approach this hunt as a meat hunt and be happy to harvest a spike as well.
 - If neither of those descriptions fit you, this hunt probably is not for you.

3rd RIFLE YOUTH BULL:

- **Basics:** One youth hunter is drawn. The hunter is restricted to three days and may share the property with a deer hunter.
- **Category:** Management
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Of the three youth management bull hunts since 2015, two have harvested, one was unsuccessful.
- **What to Expect:**
 - The 3rd season youth hunter should expect to harvest a spike. It would be rare, but there might be an opportunity at a branched antler bull that has management characteristics (non-desirable genetics). The hunter should not hold out for that though and should harvest the first spike that presents a shot.

4th RIFLE BULL:

- **Basics:** In the past, this has been a combination bull/buck hunt. Starting in 2020 this will be a buddy bull hunt. Like our muzzle loader hunt, the winner gets to pick a buddy to hunt with. There will be a deer hunter on the property at the same time.
- **Category:** One is Flex, one is Management
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Of the four hunts since 2015, 3 were successful and harvested
- **What to Expect:**
 - The 4th season hunter should expect to harvest a spike. It would be rare, but there might be an opportunity at a branched antler bull that has management characteristics (non-desirable genetics). The hunter should not hold out for that though and should harvest the first spike that presents a shot.
 - Bulls harvested since 2015: 150, spike, 210

DEER HUNTS:

- **Basics:** We have two buck deer hunts, one youth during 3rd rifle season and one during 4th rifle season.
- **Category:** Unrestricted

- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Of the nine hunts since 2015, all have been successful, eight have harvested.
- **What to Expect:**
 - Bucks move onto our property once the rut starts in mid to late November. The numbers and size of the bucks harvested have been trending up each year.
 - 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.

COW HUNTS:

- **Basics:** Starting in 2020, we offer up to six cow hunts each year
- **Category:** Cow/Antlerless
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** Overall success rate since 2010 is 39%, harvest rate 22%. We started guiding our cow hunts in 2017, since then success rate is 55%, harvest rate is 50%.
- **What to Expect:**
 - Prior to 2020 we assigned dates to each hunter. Beginning in 2020 we are using the “Rolling Hunt Opportunity” to hopefully increase the quality of the hunt. All 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.
 - The statistics tell the story, it is a 50/50 proposition on whether the cows are on the property or not. However, starting in 2020, that should change.
 - If you enjoy being out and watching a lot of bull elk and perhaps have a chance to harvest a cow, then this hunt is for you. If you want a sure thing, this is not it.
 - Your schedule may have to be somewhat flexible. If you are next in line and get skipped over because you are unavailable, we would come back to you for the next available opportunity.

TURKEY HUNTS:

- **Basics:** We typically offer between 8 and 10 turkey hunts each spring
- **Category:** Bearded Turkey
- **Success/Harvest Rates:** We have had 25 turkey hunts since 2014. 23 have harvested, 24 were successful.
- **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.
 - In the past two years, 14 of the 15 harvested have been Toms.
 - Beginning in 2020, Turkey Hunts will 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.

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 in our Rules and Regulations or document titled "The Basics."
- www.hrcaonline.org/BackcountryHunts for more information