



# UNDERSTANDING THE HUNT

- The question “why hunt?” is a complex one. People hunt for a variety of reasons. Many of those reasons are so tied to family, cultural values and beliefs that they are often hard to express.
- A small number of Albertans hunt out of necessity (subsistence hunters); however, most hunters do not hunt out of need. Instead, they hunt because they enjoy being in the field or woods and being a part of the rhythms and cycles of nature, as well as bringing something home for the dinner table. If you are a hunter, it is a good idea to address the question for yourself: Why do *you* hunt? Only then will you be able to tell others, and perhaps prevent someone from advocating the removal of your hunting privilege.
- Hunting is a traditional, natural activity that dates back at least 15,000 years in North America. It is a fundamental part of who we are as a species. Hunting helped develop our intelligence, helped us to organize into communities working for the common good, and helped us understand the fragile and temporary nature of life itself.
- Hunting celebrates the fact that there are still wild places on earth where a person can learn and use some of the skills that our ancestors used to pursue wild game to survive. Using those skills and feeling the emotions and excitement that accompany their use reconnects us with the land, a connection that has been lost to most urban people. Hunting wild animals in wild places allows people to truly feel involved with the rhythms and cycles of the land and environment. It is an acknowledgement of who we are as human beings, part of the fabric of life on this planet.
- Conscientious hunters work hard to make sure an animal is taken as humanely as possible. They have studied that animal’s behavior, have come to know how it lives, and where it will be at certain times of the day. They may spend days working to create an opportunity to place one fatal shot. Such work and study forges an understanding and respect for an animal that goes beyond simple knowledge.
- When a kill is made, a hunter’s emotions are mixed. There is the joy of success tempered by the sadness of the death of a fellow living creature. This mixture of emotions leads to some inescapable conclusions about the transience of life and the finality of death. It is at the kill that traditional aboriginal hunters hold small ceremonies acknowledging the spirit of the animal and the life it has just given the hunters and their families. Such recognition is rarely considered for the animal that provided the steak bought at a supermarket.
- Hunting is a personal choice. Hunters respect their right to hunt, as well as the right of others who choose not to hunt.
- Regulated hunting delivers a significant portion of the money needed to manage wildlife populations and their habitat, conduct wildlife research, and enforce wildlife laws. In Alberta more than \$15 million per year is contributed through hunting license sales to wildlife conservation programs and general revenue.
- If people did not hunt, there would be significant increases in the cost of wildlife damage to crops and property, and a loss of revenue for wildlife conservation programs and projects. Overpopulation and human/wildlife interaction pose a hazard to public safety.

- Hunting is a significant population management tool for the wildlife resource, and if there were no hunting, inhumane animal fatalities through starvation, disease and motor vehicle collisions (which usually result in human injuries as well) would increase dramatically.
- A successful hunt is not dependent upon harvesting an animal. It is dependent on the opportunity to be in a wildlife habitat and see wildlife, whether game or non-game. Relationships with family, friends and colleagues are key factors in measuring the value of the hunt.
- In 2007, Alberta declared the first Provincial Hunting Day for the province on September 22. This day promoted hunting as an important wildlife management tool as well as a healthy outdoor activity that fosters strong connections to and awareness about nature and the environment. A number of organizations provided opportunities for committed hunting enthusiasts and those who might be interested in hunting to learn more about this activity. The success and support of Alberta's first Provincial Hunting Day caused the Alberta government to announce this special day as an annual event on the fourth Saturday in September. In addition to promoting the strong tradition of hunting, additional opportunities have been provided for resident youths to experience recreational hunting for upland game birds on Provincial Hunting Day. The goal of Provincial Hunting Day is to raise the awareness of hunting as an outdoor pursuit and to encourage the recruitment of new hunters. It is important to note that Provincial Hunting Day is an educational/awareness day and, aside from youth initiatives to hunt upland game birds without a license, there are no additional opportunities being made for hunters and hunting.

## KEY CONTACTS

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<b>Why Hunt? By Don H. Meredith</b>	This series of articles is available on Mr. Meredith's <b>web-site</b> at: <a href="http://www.donmeredith.ca">www.donmeredith.ca</a>

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