

## Smoke and a hearty . . .

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Front stuffer, smoke pole or muzzle loader, call it what you want. Hunting with a muzzleloader is fun and our season opens this Saturday and runs through Nov 16. We can kill three does a day here in Unit L and no more than one buck a day, limit of three for the entire year.

They use to call it a primitive weapon in some states and that was the justification for a special season. However, make no mistake; it is no longer a primitive weapon. Yes, you load down the muzzle and yes you only get one shot but that is as primitive as it gets. Today's muzzleloaders are about as primitive as the stealth bomber.

Today hunters are using muzzleloaders capable of some amazing results. I personally have made clean, killing shots at over 200-yards. I know of at least four instances of deer killed with shots over 300-yards. The range, trajectory and kinetic energy are right up there with many of the big rifles. With the modern innovations, the hang-fire or slow fires of the old days are rare. Topped with a quality scope, our black powder rifles are an effective hunting tool for just about any game and under any conditions.

I shoot an ancient-about 10-years old-Knight Disc Rifle. By some standards, it is outdated but Tony Knight gave it to me and I like it. I have done well with it. I once shot an antelope at 213-yards and dropped it dead in its tracks. A few years ago, here in Wilson County I shot a nice 8-pt buck at 198-yards and no trailing job was required. It has killed several mature bucks quickly and cleanly.

There are many makes, many models, many bullets, and loads from which to choose. I happen to shoot 150-grains of Pyrodex-three, 50-grain pellets with a 275 grain, T-shock bullet. The ignition device is a shotgun shell primer. All the components combine to give me good performance. There are many other options available.

I did not hunt many of the ML days last year. I don't know why, weather maybe or maybe just

lazy. It is one of the prime seasons of the year in terms of a chance for a mature deer. It is the pre-rut and buck movement should be steady, if we have cold weather. As I recall, opening day the fog had everything blanketed in. I did shoot a doe one cool morning but that was about it.

The all-important component of seeing buck movement is the temperature. The stage of the rut or pre-rut makes little difference if it is 70 degrees and sunny. Deer want cool to cold weather for movement during daylight hours. Just as it is with humans, if they are going to be unusually active, deer want cooler temperatures. Hot weather-they move at night.

This year, I fully intend to hold out for a mature buck. I have a full two weeks to hunt, Nov. 3-16 so there is no reason to end my buck hunting with a small one. I have already used two of my three, buck tags. I am saving the last one for a good buck.

Make no mistake; I will work on the does. Shooting a doe with a muzzleloader, will not hurt your chances at a buck. In fact, killing a doe and just letting her lay may well increase your chances for a buck. I have killed several bucks when they came up to check the doe.

Deer cannot tell from where a muzzleloader shot comes. I have seen it so many times, shoot a deer and hit or miss, and have that deer run right at me. Last year, I shot a doe at 65-yards. I hit her well. She ran right at me and fell just 10-yards from my tree.

So, if a doe comes by, shoot her and let her lay where she falls. She may well attract a passing buck. I have seen that a dozen times.

The muzzleloader season opens Saturday, even if you don't have to use black powder. You have two weeks to hunt before rifle season opens. Go for it.

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