



Tips for Bear Hunting

Plan Your Hunt, Know Your Capabilities, and Know your Shot

Bear hunting is a physically demanding activity, especially removing a harvested bear from the woods. Pre-hunt planning is very important to a successful and rewarding bear hunting experience. Long before harvesting a bear, the hunter must decide how the meat will be processed and how the hide will be used. Both the meat and the hide can spoil quickly especially at temperatures above freezing. A dead bear can be large and cumbersome. Skinning, processing and transporting a bear are difficult tasks and may be impossible without assistance. Hunters should arrange to have help available for all aspects of handling a harvested bear and have plans made ahead of time to ensure that the meat and hide are properly processed. Bears have a tremendous amount of fat and a thick hide that provide great insulation. As a result, it is imperative that the hide be removed as soon as possible to prevent meat spoilage. In temperatures above freezing, if there is going to be a delay in getting your harvested bear to a cooler, you should consider quartering it to allow the heavier portions to cool more quickly. Before taking your bear out from the place it is killed, pack bags of ice in the body cavity or around the quarters. You may dismember the carcass to pack it out of the place of kill as long as all of the carcass parts are present at check in and the identity of the sex is not destroyed.

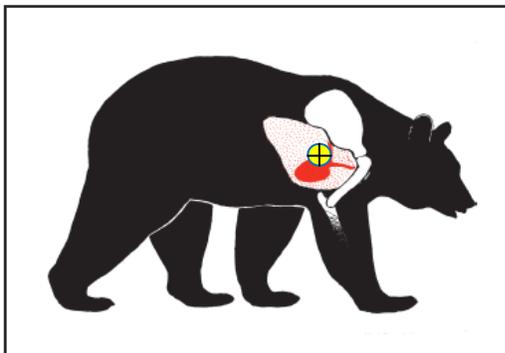
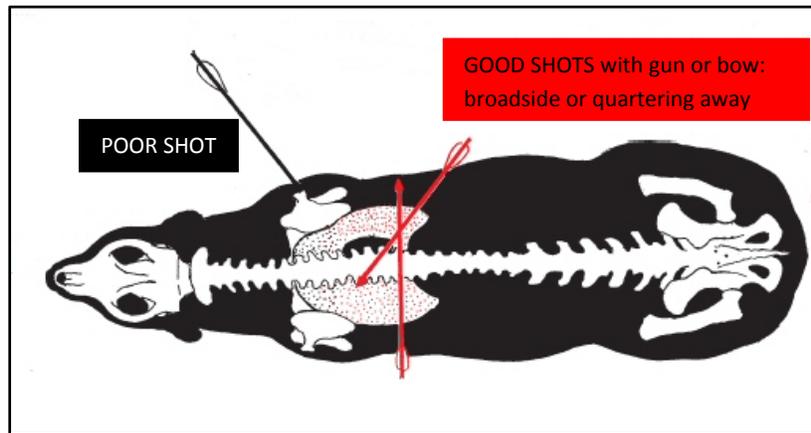
To help ensure the future of bear hunting, and all hunting, it is incredibly important to instill respect for the outdoors and acceptable hunting ethics for all hunters. Making a clean kill as humanely as possible is a fundamental component of ethical hunting. Incorrect shot placement on a black bear can lead to unnecessary suffering, wounding, and failure to retrieve the animal. Making a clean kill should be the top priority for hunters who decide to shoot a bear. An animal that is harvested humanely shows more character in a hunter than just a lucky shot. Especially if you are taking a youth or apprentice hunter bear hunting, help it be a positive experience by emphasizing ethics and making a clean kill.

To be ethical, all hunters need to be proficient with their firearm or bow, understand their personal effective range, and have an understanding of basic bear anatomy for shot placement. This will help lead to a quick and effective kill and minimize the chance for wounding the bear. The following are some general tips to help ensure correct shot placement:

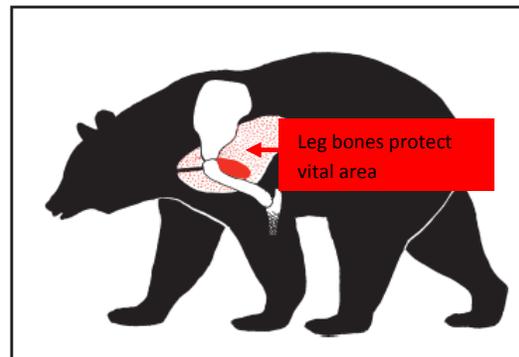
- Hunters must understand that bears are built differently than deer and other big game animals. The chest of a bear is compressed compared to that of a deer when looking at it from the side.
- A bear's most vital area is an 8" circle behind the front shoulder.
- The best shot opportunity is a broadside shot or "quartering away" for penetration into the vital organs.
- To take your shot, wait for the bear to step forward with the near side leg exposing the heart/lung area.
- Shots directly in the shoulder bone are not recommended. Bears have massive, muscular shoulders and heavy bones. A hunter who shoots ahead of the front shoulder may miss or injure the animal.
- A head shot is not recommended since a bear skull is very dense. The blunt, rounded shape can cause bullets or arrows to glance off or become lodged in the skull without penetrating.
- Frontal shots or shots from directly overhead (like might occur from a tree stand) are not recommended because they offer little opportunity for penetration of the vital organs (especially with archery equipment).

- NEVER take a shot you are unsure of, at a bear that is not clearly visible, or one that is positioned in such a way that you cannot cleanly hit the vital area.
- If you make a poor shot, a wounded bear can run for considerable distances before dying. Heavy bones, hides, and fat layers may prevent quick-clotting blood from dripping and leaving a good trail, making an injured bear hard to track.
- KNOW YOUR CAPABILITIES AND KNOW YOUR SHOT!

The National Bowhunter Education Foundation (www.nbef.org) has created an excellent document called **Advanced Black Bear Anatomy and Shot Placement Guide** for both archery and firearm hunters (including muzzleloaders); the following photos have been adapted from the NBEF publication.



Best shot placement for gun or bow.



Shoulder and leg bones protect the heart and lungs when the near front leg is behind during stride.

Wait until the near front leg is in front or ahead during stride.