

Top 10 Backcountry Wilderness Hunting Tips

- Three friends: Chuck, Sean, and Jeff all had the opportunity to hunt a bull in the Backcountry in 2019
- These are their tips for maximizing your success and enjoyment if you get to hunt in the Backcountry.



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Check out “HRCA Backcountry Wilderness Area” on Facebook every Tuesday for new game camera pictures. There is no better way to get a weekly preview of what you might see on your hunt. However, remember that these elk’s range extends miles beyond the Backcountry. The rut is especially notorious for motivating the elk to move from where they held most of the summer. The elk are much more elusive than you’d predict, and locating a specific bull is very difficult. Bulls disappear for months at a time and new bulls may appear any time.

This is NOT a high fence hunt! In fact, there really aren't any fences. The elk are as smart as any elk, anywhere. The only enclosure is their own self-imposed boundaries defined by a disdain for human activity. The high success rates in the Backcountry are the result of the amazing quality of the habitat and low hunting pressure. The number of elk on the property at any given time varies wildly based on the conditions...sometimes just the direction of the prevailing wind!



Work on your physical and mental toughness! Every little bit of extra endurance, strength, and flexibility will make a difference on this elk hunt, just like any high country adventure. While there are certainly plenty of opportunities to glass and shoot, you may get the chance to track down calling elk. Be prepared to move fast. None of the terrain is flat, and thickets of Gambel oaks make it impossible to travel in a straight line. Also, keep a positive mental attitude. There will be no elk and then dozens, or maybe a trophy just out of range followed by busting a bull only 25 yards away. You never know what might happen next so stay sharp.



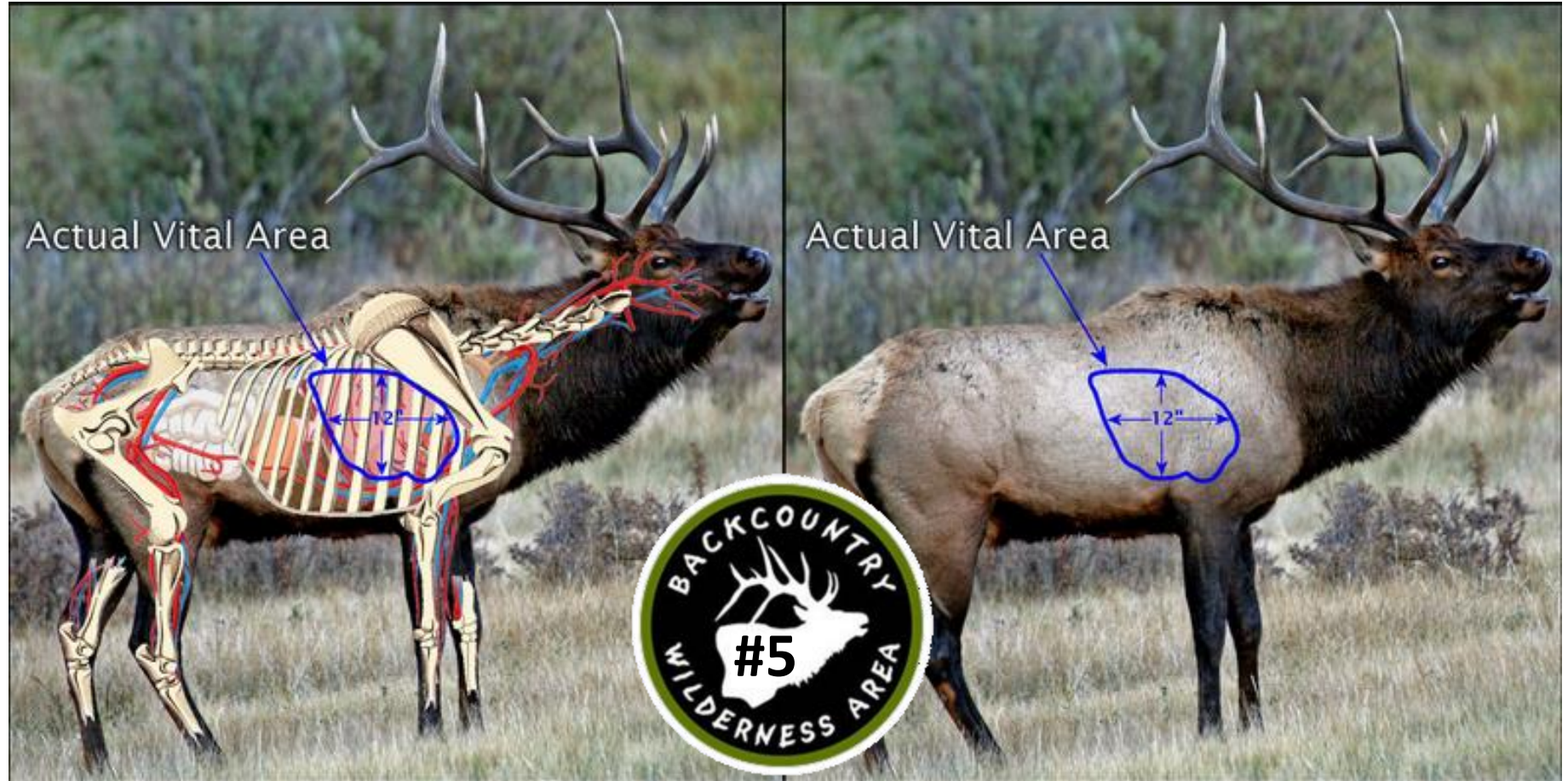


Practice shooting as much as you can. Shot opportunities are often very brief so you need to know your weapon and your capabilities.

Practice the following:

- Shooting in standing and kneeling positions off of a tripod. Prone and seated shots aren't typically an option.
- Shots from 25 yards to 200 yards.
- If you are a Muzzleloader Buddy hunter, make sure to practice with your buddy's gun as well. Having another round immediately available could be invaluable.

Study elk anatomy and visualize your shot placement. Elk are large and tough. While the vital area is larger than most game, it is also more critical that your shot enters the vitals. Pronghorn and deer can quickly expire from a misplaced shot, while an elk can easily go miles (leaving the property) on a errant strike. If you cannot hold your crosshairs in the 12" vital area then don't take the shot! Your guide is going to help ensure you have a safe shot, and give you the "Yes" that you can pull the trigger. It is up to you to determine if the shot is ethical.



Source: <https://westernhunter.net/tactics/the-anatomy-of-an-elk-proper-knowledge-of-shot-angles-and-placement-is-vital/>

Safety is the number one rule! Be aware of your muzzle at all times, even if you are unloaded. Remind one another to be diligent and don't take it personal if you get reminded to watch your muzzle. Also, make sure to keep it legal by unloading your rifle or removing your primer before entering a vehicle. Unless you have an archery tag, don't forget your solid fluorescent orange or pink vest and hat!





Bring the right gear:

- Dress warmer than you'd expect. The deep draws in the Backcountry are up to 20 degrees cooler than your backyard. Some days start out bitter and end up sweltering.
- Your own set of 7X to 10X binoculars.
- Plenty of food and water in a day pack.
- Your weapon and ammunition.
- Bring your tag! (Some tags are landowner vouchers, make sure to exchange your voucher at the CDOW)

Hunter's Perspective: Top 10 Things to Know About HRCA Backcountry Wilderness Area Hunts

Trust your guides:

- They know the lay of the land better than you can imagine.
- They know how the elk behave given certain conditions like prevailing winds, the rut, human pressure, and moisture levels.
- They know they aren't perfect. They are the first to admit they won't get every hunt right. Do your guides and yourself a favor by embracing their game plan. Don't be afraid to ask questions or make suggestions.





You will enjoy your hunt much more if you understand the classification of your hunt. If you have a bull tag you might be hunting a Management, Restricted, or Unrestricted bull. Wildlife management is a science and the Backcountry can only sustain a population of 5-6 dominant bulls. The tag distribution is assessed every year to ensure that the herd is healthy and that trophy quality is maintained. Each type of hunt has its own unique challenges. The guides are there to ensure the correct class of bull is harvested to manage the population.





There are responsibilities after the hunt:

- Be prepared to process your animal. The archery hunts can have daytime highs of 100 degrees. Have lots of coolers or contact a processor ahead of time.
- Contact a taxidermist ahead of time if you are interested in a shoulder or European mount.
- Continue to support the Backcountry. Remember that this is probably the best HOA perk in the entire world! This is an unbelievable privilege that we are all spokespeople for.

