

How to get better results on your hunt

By varying your tactics, you can increase your chances of success when hunting jackal.



BY GARY LAUBSCHER

Gary Laubscher, founder of africanpredator.com, has almost 30 years' experience in predation management, and runs a professional hunting operation that focuses on predator hunts. Email him at farmersweekly@caxton.co.za. Subject line: Predation or at africanpredator.laubscher@gmail.com.

It's easy to become complacent about calling in jackal and simply employ the same methods every time. By varying your tactics and using the available resources, you make the hunt more interesting for yourself as well as increase your chances of success.

• Drop and go

If you call jackal and they merely bark back at you without coming in, it's time to adopt a different approach: in this case the 'drop-and-go' tactic. A fellow hunter drives you into the territory and drops you off. He then drives on into the wind and stops the truck 600m away. From here, he calls the jackal while you sit tight and light up the area.

For safety's sake, you should both know exactly where the other person is when using this tactic. It's an excellent idea to both use night vision as you'll be able to see each other's infrared beams. If only one of you is using night vision, make sure the other has a reflector to mark his location from afar.

• From the ground

If the jackal bark and don't approach, another tactic is to get out of the truck. If you think they are moving to the right, walk about 350m into the dark at a sharp angle to the right of that direction, then call from the ground with a small light mounted on your rifle. In other words, try to cut the jackal off, but at a wide angle. (If they are moving to the left, move out into the dark at a sharp angle to the left of that direction.)

• Without lights

Alternatively, walk without lights towards the area where the jackal are barking; you can see the ground in the dark if you are close to it. Better still, try walking on a sand track or a path created by cattle or sheep.

A useful tip: avoid staring directly at an object in the dark to identify it; look just to the right of it. This will allow you to 'see' better in the dark.

• Get up early

If you are still finding it hard to call in jackal in the evening, try getting up at about 3am and calling until it's light, as predators are sometimes active in the early morning hours rather than after dusk.

• A simple trick

Carry a broom with you and sweep a metre-wide line behind you on the path every so

often. Inspect later to see if fresh tracks are evident. If they are, call straight away.

• The windmill advantage

If you're lucky enough to have windmills in the area that can be climbed easily and safely, call from these at night. They make good vantage points, especially in thick vegetation, and are familiar to predators, so do not attract attention.

If the windmills are at least 1km apart, call from each in turn. We use this system and arrange for two hunters to be back-to-back on each windmill so that we can scan all around us.

• Don't get lost

I've used a Garmin eTrex for years. It's rugged and waterproof, with a long battery life. The 5,6cm monochrome display can be read in any light and the interface is easy to use.

It's a valuable tool, especially on unfamiliar farms, as it leaves a digital 'bread-crumbs' trail that enables me to find my way home easily in the dark.

USE A BROOM TO SWEEP A METRE-WIDE LINE BEHIND YOU ON THE PATH OCCASIONALLY; INSPECT IT LATER TO CHECK FOR TRACKS

If it is safe to do so, I move from waypoint to waypoint on private sand roads without lights. The GPS is so accurate that it will invariably take me over the tyre tracks I made when I drove out to mark the waypoints beforehand.

If the battery dies or the eTrex is accidentally switched off before I saved the trail, it will show again when the device is switched back on.

• Keep records

Finally, keep records of your hunts: the sounds used, the time taken to call a predator, what species it was, the location, the phase of the moon, the date, and similar details. This is a valuable tactic; in a year you can look back and see what worked, which will help you prepare for future hunts. ■FW