

# Jackal and caracal: lighting and calling techniques

Lighting and sound are two crucial aspects of jackal and caracal control. There's a wide choice of hi-tech devices and traditional, proven techniques available; the trick is knowing how and when to use them.



## BY GARY LAUBSCHER

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**L**ED lighting for hunters has largely taken over from the 12V halogen systems, and for two good reasons, namely that it draws less power, and enables you to walk in the bush with the light mounted. A halogen torch, linked to a large 12V battery, is too heavy for this.

It is simple to set up your light for night calling. At dusk, place a small reflector on a bush about 70m away from you and your shooting chair. Shine your torch onto the reflector, simply zooming into the light, and align it so that you can see the bush in your scope. Check the light every 15 or so minutes to ensure that you are still zoomed in.

In this way, when you rotate the light on your shooting chair, the rifle is always 'spot on', and when the jackal or caracal arrives and you pick it up with the light, it is automatically dead centre in your scope. All you need to do is aim and squeeze the trigger.

Dim the light when you see the eyes of an animal, especially those of cats. If you don't work with a dimmer, simply lift the rifle with the light so it shines away from the animal's eyes; in this way, the centre of the beam is not so intense on the target.

You could use different coloured lights for the hunt: red light softens the glare, while white light, set on very dim, is best used by hunters with experience.

You could also use amber light, which may make it easier for you to see and identify the animal at night.

## LIGHT ROTATION AND TIMING

While waiting for darkness to fall, scan the area with day-vision binoculars. Before you start calling, scan the area first with a red light, and squeak with your lips, in case the animal is close by.

When you begin calling, scan three to four times in full circles before switching off the light, in case the jackal or caracal is in the vicinity at the start of the hunt. After three to four minutes, scan the area twice every time you put on the light.

When you turn and scan, count to 15. On that count, you must be back at the spot you started scanning. Turn on the light every 15 to 20 seconds, and never delay for longer as the jackal may be close by.

## CALLING SYSTEMS

Many options are available for calling jackals or caracals. We live in exciting times with advanced technology, but cost-effective methods, such as using a simple hand caller from a bakkie, has worked for many years.

However, while you could call in jackal or caracal with a simple CD player or a car CD player hooked up to a speaker, using better equipment will result in a better success rate.

Calling predators is certainly a challenge, but after the basics have been mastered, it becomes much simpler and results come more often. However, it will remain a challenge despite your experience, and every time you call a jackal or caracal, you learn something new.

Also remember that the callers you use are only as good as the hunter using them. If you don't know how to call properly, a good caller is not going to help. Educating yourself is thus key to being successful.

**THE CALLERS USED FOR HUNTING ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE HUNTERS USING THEM**

## PLAYING THE PART

In order to be successful, you need to call the animal *towards* you. One method of doing this is to play the role of a dying animal, such as a rabbit, or an animal in distress. However, remember that any suspicious behaviour or sound will spook the animal and it will take off, so don't play sounds too loudly or too frequently.

For example, jackals and caracals know that rabbits don't have big lung capacity, so don't blow too hard on the hand caller. You must have patience, and give every standing area at least an hour before moving on. Remember that the slightest sound travels further at night, so don't allow your sounds to echo. Also don't expect them to always approach downwind, as many make mistakes, and most caracal can't 'wind' people and will approach from unexpected directions. If you have called from two or three spots in the same area, and nothing has happened, move about 2km away and start calling again. ■ **FW**