

Get the details right to improve your success

Pay attention to the small factors that could affect your success rate, such as smells, sights, sounds, and timing.



BY GARY LAUBSCHER

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The jackal answers your calls at night, but doesn't come in; does this sound familiar? There can be various reasons for this. The night you go out, the veld might be 'dead', with no rabbits, buck or other wildlife around. This is just nature's way. It's disappointing and annoying, but it's something you can't control.

On the other hand, there may be times when you're doing something wrong.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- **Proper camouflage of the vehicle**

Does your bakkie smell of diesel, a scent associated with humans? Try using three open bottles of scent (made of jackal urine and gland lure) downwind in front of you to hide the human smell.

Don't use shade cloth to camouflage your vehicle, as it's squeaky, shiny and makes a lot of noise. Place a rubber mat in the bakkie. It's quiet underfoot and produces a neutral smell that won't interest the predator.

Also remember to never use black covering at night on the Karoo plains or grassy gold-coloured lands in the Free State. Black covering is dense and easy to see. When driving from one spot to another, place red filters over the truck's lights. Don't call from the middle of the road; always pull off to the side.

After calling, don't switch on white lights to illuminate the area or engage in loud conversation. Open the rifle bolt in readiness, and have your hunting partner lift up the netting and fetch your caller in from the veld. Keep scanning the area. When everything is ready, drive on.

- **The right sounds**

You may be playing your sounds too long or too loudly. You may also be playing the wrong sound for the time of year. Rather play the 'food' sound for five seconds, wait 30 seconds to a minute and then repeat.

Don't use challenge sounds too often in the breeding season. This is a serious mistake many hunters make, and it will chase away younger jackals.

- **The direction of wind when marking out hunting spots**

Turn to face the wind at your last marking point to make that the first spot, then work

your way into the wind to the other spots. Always sweep a metre-wide line across the sand road between, for example, the second and fourth spot. On the way back to your calling spots, check the broom marks for fresh tracks. If any are visible, stop and make a call. This will often bring out the predator.

Remember that cats like hunting in windy conditions; if there's no wind you stand less chance of success.

- **Sitting time**

You need to stay put and call for at least an hour for a jackal or cat, so be patient.

- **Calling times**

It's very important to start out at your first spot during the day. Arrive early, cover up and await nightfall.

Don't move about a lot during the day as you'll be spotted from far away.

IF THERE'S NO WIND YOU STAND LESS CHANCE OF SUCCESS

If you call at the normal time after it gets dark and suddenly your success is not what it used to be, change your tactics from dusk to dawn. Wait a month, then go call at two hours before dawn or after midnight.

- **The moon**

Hunt a week prior to the new moon for cats, as they like travelling on dark nights, and a week after the new moon for jackals as they see better when there's a little light in the sky.

NO SUCCESS

If you've followed the above tips, and are still not successful, consider your deodorant. It is best not to use any fragrance or shaving cream before a hunt. Smoke your clothes above a fire to hide your natural scent and never urinate in places from which you intend to call.

Smear Seagro fertiliser or red bait onto your tyres to help hide your scent. Red bait smells as foul as jackal gland lure (see FW, 18 May).

Finally, don't talk, open noisy food packets or eat while jackal hunting. Stay quiet! ■ FW