33 Field Card: Big Game

The tag, the load, the shot and the hours of one big game hunt, copied onto a page that rides in your pack.

On a big game hunt, the tag in your pocket settles much of what's legal: the species, the unit, the weapon and which sex you may take. Copy each of those from the tag itself and this year's regulations, then fill in the rest of the card the night before you go.

01 / MY SPECIES AND TAG

CHAPTERS 25–31

Species: _____

State and hunt unit: _____

Tag: ☐ over-the-counter ☐ draw Points used: _____

Legal animal, as the tag words it: _____

Antler or horn rule, if any: _____

Next application deadline: _____ Points I hold: _____

- Mule deer or whitetail: tail, ears and antlers must agree, plus the hind-leg gland when I can see it.

02 / MY WEAPON AND THE LEGAL MINIMUMS

CHAPTERS 8, 11 AND 27

Weapon and caliber, gauge or draw weight: _____

Load or broadhead I hunt with: _____

State minimums for this species: _____

☐ Sighted in with this exact load or broadhead

☐ Elk or a big boar: a load built for large game

03 / WHERE I AIM

CHAPTER 24

- Up the back of the near front leg, a third of the way up the chest. Elk: a touch higher. Hog: tight to the leg. Bear: up the center of the leg, once it steps forward.
- I take broadside, or quartering away with my aim on the far front leg. When the angle turns sharp, I pass (elk: past about 45 degrees).
- I pass on: quartering toward (bow: always; gun: until I'm experienced), facing me, going away, head or neck, moving, in brush, on the skyline, within 10 yd of my stand's base.

My limit from the plate test (Chapter 12): gun _____ yd · bow _____ yd

33 Field Card: Big Game

CONTINUED

04 / AFTER THE SHOT

CHAPTER 32

1. Reload and stay on it; down but moving: shoot again at once, if safe and legal. Safety on once it lies still or is gone. One landmark where it stood, one where it went out of sight.
2. Unless it's down where I can see it, wait 30–60 min for heart or lungs, at least 4 hours for the liver, 6+ hours for a gut hit or if I'm not sure (Chapter 48).
3. Unload, or cover the arrows, to climb down. On the ground: loaded, safety on, only in legal hours where my state allows. Unloaded at a fence, near anyone and once it's dead.
4. Start at the first landmark, even if I'm sure I missed. Walk beside the trail, not on it, and flag it.
5. Come in from above and behind the head, safety on; if it's breathing, stay back, ready to shoot (Chapter 48).
6. Tag it before field dressing, if required (Chapter 50).

05 / MY DAY

CHAPTER 32

Legal shooting hours: _____ to _____

In my seat by: _____ My stop time: _____

Main stand and backup, for the forecast wind: _____

Hunt plan left with: _____ Back by: _____

☐ Times on my distance tape

☐ Blaze orange on from the truck until I'm back

- Loaded only once I'm seated (and clipped in, in a tree); unloaded at my stop time. A text before I switch stands and when I'm out.

06 / SPECIAL RULES

CHAPTERS 25–27 AND 29–31

- CWD testing where I hunt: ☐ required ☐ voluntary. I don't eat an animal that tests positive.

Carcass rules, state I hunt and home state: _____

Check or inspection due: _____ ☐ Head, hide or horns kept unfrozen

Bear cub, as my regulations define it: _____

- Grizzly country: spray on my belt; meat left 100+ yd from the gut pile, glassed before I walk back in.

☐ Bear ID test or goat ID quiz, where required or offered

- Bear cooked to 165°F, wild pork to 160°F. Gloves and eye protection on before I open a hog.