



The terrain can be treacherous at times and can take a heavy toll on your body. Getting in shape first is an important step to a successful trip. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

Shape up for the hunt

My hunting ordeal ends on the last day of the hunting season at one-half hour after sunset, and begins again the next morning one-half hour before sunrise. I guess you can say I am obsessed with hunting.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

now days are treatable with medications and best to have a good supply of any needed prescriptions when you take the trip. It helps to have a doc who is also into the outdoors because he will understand best what conditions you will be facing.

Spend as much time over the summer getting into the best physical shape you can. Hunting in the high country can be very physically demanding. All of your walking will be uphill, downhill or side-hill as there is really no level ground in the mountains. Throw in a bunch of deadfalls, rocks and chuckholes and you have the full Monte of a workout.

Taking a power walk every day is a good start. Begin slowly, increasing your distance and speed every day. After a couple weeks, start wearing your pack with some weights in it. Again, slowly begin increasing the weight you carry. When you get here, think about how much equipment you will be carrying around with you and try to prepare for that weight load.

I bought an exercise backpack that came with a good selection of weights. As I increase my workouts, I simply add more weight to the pack. When I use the treadmill, I increase the uphill setting at the same time. This closely simulates walking uphill with a pack during the season. It also gives me an opportunity to practice my impression of an old man desperately out of breath.

Wear the boots you will be using while on the hunt when you walk the dog, or take a stroll in the neighborhood. This is what you will be wearing when you get here and it helps condition your leg muscles to those boots. It will also serve to help break in any new footwear before the trip. I would not wear them for my workout because of a whole score of foot and leg ailments you can get from not having proper support for running or cross training.

Eating right and getting the proper amount of sleep is always important. Since we're preparing ourselves, we might try and shed any extra pounds that we may be lugging around. I hate that word diet so maybe we can call it eating smarter, or in my case, eating less. I love food and I eat way too much "healthy food."

Remember that you will be dealing with altitude on your hunt. If your camp is going to be at 9,000-foot altitude, there



You will be at high altitudes and carrying a load while on your hunt. Be certain your body is up to the task. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

will only be 33 percent of the oxygen available at sea level. That means your body will only be able to function at 86 percent of its physical capabilities. All those statistics mean that you are going to tire quicker, and feel like you are sucking air from the rafters.

Any hunters who are coming from lower altitudes, you will want to give your body some time to acclimate, and avoid altitude sickness. Altitude sickness can cause nausea, vomiting, headache, shortness of breath, weakness, mental confusion and a score of other symptoms.

The cure for altitude sickness is to descend in altitude as quickly as possible. Bring them down several thousand feet in altitude and get them to a medical facility to be checked out. Many times, the symptoms disappear just as quickly as they appear. I have seen victims near unconscious when I arrived, who were alert, talking, and near normal, a short time after we began our descent.

If not treated, it could lead to death and the cancelation of all your life memberships. You definitely don't want a one-way ticket west so take your time when you are here, and don't ignore the symptoms.

Spend a few days here getting acclimated in Montrose, before you head up the hill. Take a few walks each day, nothing

vigorous, and drink plenty of water. The water will also help with the dry climate we have. Sports drinks with electrolytes are good as well, especially if you are perspiring. Avoid alcohol and drinks containing caffeine.

After a couple days here in town, it is safer to move on up in altitude to your camp or lodge. Once there, take it easy at the start. Give your body a little time again to get used to another hike in altitude. A good 24 hours of avoiding strenuous activity and the same rules of avoiding the caffeine and booze still apply. Continue drinking plenty of water throughout your hunt, even if you do not feel thirsty.

Getting your body in shape for the hunt will increase your chances of success and overall enjoyment of the trip. You can't keep Murphy away, but hopefully, you can minimize his presence. We want to see you hunting here every year, so go home with a trophy, and not in an aromatic pine box. In the meantime, I have to start packing; season is just around the corner.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America seeking adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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