



Preseason fever or cabin fever

I was staring vacantly out the window, listening to the whine. My wife happened by and yelled at me to stop that incessant whining and go do something useful. Problem is, this time of year is tough on an outdoor person, and she just does not understand preseason fever.

For me, the hunting season ends a half-hour after sunset on the last day of the season and begins again the following morning. This leaves me approximately 12 hours to read my mail, catch up on some sleep, and say hello to my wife before it is time to start preparing for the next season.

Some folks think that anticipation before a trip is better than the actual trip itself. I suppose there is some truth to that because I do like preparing and looking forward to a trip, but given a choice, I would rather be on the trip.

No matter what your chosen outdoor activity — hunting, fishing, camping or hiking — preseason fever hits you at some time or another. Around about January, when the winds howl down the chimney and the coal is getting low in the bin, is when it hits the worse.

This preseason fever is far too familiar to require any comment whatsoever, but in the eyes of a publisher, a blank page for a column does not sell many newspapers. And, unless you stole this paper from your neighbor's driveway, you are a case in point. With that all being said, I thought we would talk about something else entirely different, yet somehow related; cabin fever.

Cabin fever is a type of hysteria or

claustrophobic reaction caused by being stuck indoors, with the same people, for a prolonged period of time. The malady usually strikes during the winter months and the reactions can be quite severe. Watch the movie "The Shining" sometime, and you can see just how bad it can get.

If you have children at home, this cabin fever can get real in a hurry. Not only do you have your own condition to work through, but also kids will make it worse. Their endless fighting, yelling, running around and complaining will drive you crazy. My answer was to send them outside, but my wife would not let me do that in the winter.

The actual medical condition closely related to cabin fever is called seasonal affective disorder or SAD for short. It is a condition that relates to mood and occurs at a certain time of year. For most folks, winter is the time it appears, and some report the same symptoms year after year at the same time.

In a place like Alaska, where the winter months can really drag on, as many as 10 percent of the population suffers from SAD. Diagnosis and treatment for SAD is handled on an individual basis but usually involves light treatment, ionized air administration, counseling, the hormone melatonin and sometimes an anti-depressant medication.

There is a strong belief that a



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

vitamin deficiency may also be part of the root cause. We get vitamin D from sunlight and during the winter months can become deficient because of the time we spend indoors. Taking a vitamin D supplement may help, and so would two weeks on a beach in the Turks and Caicos mid-winter.

There are things you can do to ward off the cabin fever blues, and most of them involve staying busy. I don't mean busy as in housework or puzzles, rather something to help get ready for upcoming outdoor season.

For starters, consider getting into shape. We all put on a few extra pounds over the winter months while we are cooped up indoors. Hitting the exercise bike or treadmill, working the weights or even going for walk will make it much easier for your mind and body to cope. You will also notice an increase in strength and stamina when you finally return to the woods again come spring.

I am not one to sit in front of the TV all winter either. Instead, consider learning a few new things over the winter. Take that long overdue first-aid and CPR course or catch up on some survival skills. There are lots of books and videos available on just about anything outdoors related.

This is a great time to go over your outdoor equipment and make any repairs needed. The duct tape you repaired the tent with last July could be replaced with something of

a more permanent nature. Fishing gear can be gone over, as can hunting equipment.

Post-Christmas is a great time to watch for sales on outdoor gear. Lots of retailers will mark down last years clothing and equipment to make room for the latest and greatest stuff. Plan ahead for the winter sales by socking away a few bucks over the summer months. Getting new toys will really help pass the cabin fever time.

Last of all, head outside. Don't go outside just to go off to work or shovel the driveway. Leash up the dogs and go for a walk on one of the warmer afternoons. If you have the means and abilities, try one of the many winter activities we have access to here. There is always snowmobiling, snowshoeing or even cross-country skiing. Any of these will give you a better outlook after spending some time outdoors.

In the meantime, I guess I need to move away from this window. My whining is driving the Mrs. nuts. Besides, spring turkey season is just four short months away, and I better start getting ready.

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