

Get ready before you go



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

The year is divided into four distinct seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter; for most people. My year is basically divided into hunting season and the rest of the year.

This means that I am either actively involved in hunting something, somewhere, or I am getting ready to go hunting something, somewhere. It is necessary for a person to spend lots of time planning and getting ready for an adventure.

My wife utters some nonsense about how I should be working more in order to afford things around the house and not spend so much time trying to avoid work by daydreaming. I tried to explain that I am not daydreaming, rather, I am in the early stages of planning a hunting trip. She retorted with something not worth mentioning here.

September 1 marks the beginning of the Colorado big game hunting seasons, leading off with archery. Unfortunately, it is also the beginning of the busy season for those of us involved with search and rescue.

Colorado has about 2,800 search and rescue volunteers. These good people respond to about 3,600 missions in our state annually, compiling some 500,000 volunteer hours. Around 25% of those missions are during the hunting season.

It never ceases to amaze me how little some people are prepared for the upcoming hunting seasons. I have been putting together big game hunts for a number of my out-of-state friends for several years. The number of these guys in our group seems to grow each year.

Of this diverse and growing group of people, most who live in the flatlands near sea level, there is always one or two who do nothing to prepare themselves for the trip. It is like they left work, grabbed their stuff, and showed up out here ready to hit the hunting camp at 8,000 feet in altitude. What could possibly go wrong?

Sure, they remember to bring their equipment, pack, extra warm clothes and a hunting tag. Did you remember to get your body ready for the big trip? After all, your body is going to put up with all the punishments and abuses of the hunt. It would be wise to do a little work and make sure your body is up to the task.

Many of our rescue missions start out with, "Looking for a 65-year-old male, heart condition, diabetes, COPD and bad arthritis. Last seen leaving camp at dawn, walking into Voodoo Death Canyon." Yes, I exaggerate, but most rescue missions do involve someone with underlying medical conditions. A lot of these people left their necessary prescriptions in camp.

I might point out that not all of these missions are for out-of-state hunters. There are plenty of locals who do not prepare their body for the hunt.

A good start would be a visit with



If you expect to be physically ready to handle the challenges of hunting season, you better get your body prepared. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

the family sawbones. Make sure you don't have any medical condition that could cause you problems. Most conditions nowadays are treatable with medications and it's best to have a good supply of any needed prescriptions when you take the trip.

Spend as much time over the summer getting into the best physical shape you can. Hunting in the high country can be physically demanding. All of your walking will be uphill, downhill or sidehill 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. Give some thought about how much weight you will be carrying on the trip including your pack, contents, hunting rifle and binoculars for a start.

One common mistake I see very often is a person showing up with a new pair of hunting boots. New boots that are not broken in to your feet are a huge problem. Wear those boots at home on your walks to break them in and get your feet used to walking great distances with them.

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. Much less.

Remember that you will be dealing with altitude on your hunt. If your camp is going to be at 9,000 feet altitude, there will only be 33% of the oxygen available at sea level. That means your body will only be able to function at 86% of its physical capabilities.

For those of you 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. If not treated, it could lead to death and the cancellation of all your life memberships.

If you are hunting on your own, without assistance from an outfitter, it is important to set up

a contact in town. Provide this person with an exact location of where your camp is going to be. Set up times that you will contact your liaison during the trip, and keep those contact appointments.

In the event you miss a call in time, have a plan set up where your contact will call for help. This person should contact 911, and provide all the information about your camp's location, vehicles, plate numbers, etc. If you move camp or change plans, let your contact person know immediately.

One of the problems for search and rescue is having a starting place. Having an exact location of the missing persons camp is a way for us to have a beginning point.

When you leave camp for your hunt, write out a short note and attach it to a tent flap, truck windshield or some other readily visible location. You can provide the general area you are hunting in for that day, what you are wearing, and how many are with you. This "hunter's note" saves precious time when rescue arrives, as it will give them the general direction you are heading. If you take a truck or ATV away from camp, leave a note there as to which direction you are moving on foot.

Another area that has caused problems is people not being prepared for the ever-changing weather here. They leave camp in the morning with blue skies and warm temperatures. Suddenly, a fast moving cold front comes through leaving freezing cold and much snow. If you do not have extra warm and dry clothes along, you might be in trouble. Having a pack with you, loaded with some survival gear and basic first aid equipment is essential, along with some basic knowledge of how to use it.

I wish everyone a safe and successful 2020 hunting season. I must get to work doing something so I may avoid the endless prattle of a sarcastic spouse, lest she accuse me of daydreaming again.

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Tomato problems got you down?

I think most people agree that you just can't beat the taste of home grown tomatoes. Not only do they taste better, but there's just something special about going out the back door and bringing in a handful of great tasting tomatoes. Knowing the history behind how you raised your own tomatoes is another advantage of growing them. You'll have the satisfaction of knowing that your produce is organically grown if you prefer that choice.

With that said, many gardeners are experiencing some difficulties growing their tasty treasures. Unfortunately, unexpected problems sometimes arise, so if you're facing a few gardening challenges I hope this will help.

If you've noticed the leaves of your tomato plant twisting, or drooping, it could be because of the heat and wind. Keep an eye on your soil moisture and try to avoid swings of extreme wet and dry soil. An inch or two of an organic mulch will help more than you can imagine.

Upward curling leaves or drooping leaves could also be caused by curly top virus. I'm sure you're so sick of hearing about "the virus" that the thought of a virus in your tomatoes could send you over the edge, but sometimes a virus will happen.

A purple cast to the plant, or dark purple veins may accompany this disease. As the disease progresses, your tomato plant may develop an overall yellow appearance, even though you've watered and fertilized correctly.

I'd love to tell you that there's a simple and quick solution to this problem but the truth is, there is no cure. I recommend that you pull up the plant and dispose of it. This disease was probably transmitted to your plant by a leafhopper that fed on another infected tomato plant or a host that had the disease. The good news is any tomatoes on the plant are OK to eat.

If the virus is a problem in your garden, you might want to be proactive next spring by covering your plants with a floating row cover throughout the season. This will help keep the insects off of your plants, yet allow water and air to reach them. You might also avoid planting your tomatoes next to beets and spinach since these plants can also be a source of the virus.

Another disease that's showing up on many plants is called early blight. If your plant has dark brown spots with yellowing leaves, or target-like spots on the leaves accompanied by a dark brown stem, it may have this disease.

Once again, I'm sorry, but there is no cure. Discarding the plant is your only option. Even though it's too late for your plants this year, making sure they have adequate nitrogen will help control this disease next year. Just don't get carried away and over-fertilize. A soil test in the spring may be worthwhile if your plants are having difficulties. To avoid a recurrence next year, plant your tomatoes in a different part of the garden and plant disease resistant varieties.

I know heirloom tomatoes are very popular, but these varieties are more susceptible to many of our common diseases. This is one of the big reasons why hybrids were developed. If your plants have experienced problems, you may want to ask your garden center about disease resistant varieties before you plant next spring. Buy your plants next spring.

See TOMATO page A13



Gardeners find tomato problems perplexing. (Linda McIntosh/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

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