

Frequently Asked Questions about Archery Hunting in a Suburban Environment in Montgomery County, Maryland – 2014-2015 Season

by David Berk

Q. What is the process of bringing a hunter to my property and how is the hunt carried out by the hunter?

A. The way I see this playing out is as follows. First, I would meet with the homeowners. We would look at the property and come up with a game plan.

I will need signed permission from you and your neighbors living within 100 yards of the hunting area. With your assistance as the landowner, we will identify the best place from which to hunt. The safety of the hunter and non-hunters is my top priority. I will be shooting from a tree stand approximately 25 feet above the ground. The target area will be, at the most, 35 yards from the tree stand. I will have my back towards your home, only take shots angled away from the home, and I will be aware of what lies behind the target. I will not shoot in the direction of another home, people, or pets.

I will place a baited feeder or an attractant in a specified location that will bring the deer into the best area to guarantee a good, safe and affective shot. I may also use an infrared trail camera. The deer must be positively identified before I shoot at it. The arrow will come down at a sharp angle, and if it misses the deer, it will stick in the ground. When hit, the deer will typically run off a short distance and die quickly, and then be retrieved just as would happen if I were hunting in a forest.

Q. What documents will the homeowner get from the hunter?

A. A copy of the hunting license, a copy of the hunter safety certificate, a signed release of liability, a copy of the signed permission slip, and a contract stating where, when, and how the hunt will occur.

Q. How long is the permission to hunt good for?

A. This can be an open-ended permission or simply a list of the dates the Landowner agrees to. You still have the option of retracting the permission at any time.

Q. How can we (Homeowners) be assured that the hunter has met all the required bow & arrow hunter training, and is experienced and will follow all safety requirements?

A. We will provide a copy of our licenses. In addition we will provide a copy of our hunter's safety course completion. We have been archery hunting for over 20 years. We

always wear safety equipment in trees. We are all county firefighters, so we appreciate and respect the safety aspect.

Q. How safe an activity would this be for children in the neighborhood, and have there been any incidents where people were put at risk? What is the record on accidents and close calls?

A. In my 27 years of archery and firearm hunting I have never been involved or exposed to an injury or accident. However, in my professional career as a Firefighter/Paramedic, I have been on 2 calls where a hunter has fallen from his tree stand.

Q. What steps should a landowner take to maximize the safety of the hunt?

A. There is not much you need to do to maximize safety. You, as the landowner, will be aware of when a hunter is on your property. The hunter can let you know by email, text, phone call, or simply by leaving his car in a predetermined parking spot. We could also put up a red flag or other warning symbol on the road to warn other residents of the presence of a hunter.

Q. Have there been any incidents that you were involved in where an arrow went astray, striking a building or carrying beyond its intended target?

A. No. Shots are taken from a steep downward angle that all but eliminates deflection. The arrow typically sticks in the ground.

Q. Have any pets been harmed by mistake during your hunts?

A. No. Archery hunting is, by nature, a very intimate, up close activity. The deer is positively identified as a deer, and the shot is not taken until the deer is within 35 yards and is in the correct position for a high percentage shot. This is the ethical and moral requirement for an archer.

Q. What are the distance requirements for adjoining/confronting residents to agree to the hunt?

A. The regulation reads, "It is unlawful to; hunt, trap, or shoot at wildlife within 100 yards of an occupied structure or camp without permission of the owner or occupant".

So, this would apply to a housing development in this manner. If two or three homes are within 100 yards of the tree stand or hunting location, then written permission is required from each of these homes. If a home is more than 100 yards from the hunter, then written

permission is not required, nor is there a requirement to notify homeowners beyond the 100 yards radius about the hunt.

Q. How many deer would these hunters anticipate killing in a season in our neighborhood and is this enough to make a real difference to the deer problem? Alternatively, would the hunt have to be an annual affair for it to make a meaningful difference?

A. I truly believe that this is a safe way to impact the current deer herd. It is difficult to give an accurate count of the expected deer take. This is due to many reasons. However, it would be in everyone's best interest to determine a goal.

Q. Is there an area similar to ours (1 acre single family suburban neighborhood) that has already done this? And are they available for questions?

A. Yes, I do hunt in other areas around development. I will ask the homeowners if they would accept a reference call. However, to be fair to the homeowner, I think only one person representing the neighborhood should make contact with my current homeowners. [N.B. I understand some 70 families in River Falls have signed the permission form to allow deer hunting in their development]

Q. What time does the hunt take place?

A. Legal hunting hours are from 1/2 hour after sunrise till 1/2 hour before sunset. A chart with the exact times is available & will be provided. However, the actual time that a hunter will be on your property is of your choosing.

Q. What will this cost us?

A. There is no cost to the residents/landowners. However, the homeowners are welcome to contribute to <http://www.fhfh.org/Home> <<https://mail.montgomerycountymd.gov/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://www.fhfh.org/Home>> . In addition, any tips are welcomed by the hunters.

Q. What happens if a deer is wounded and does not die? No one wants to see a wounded deer walking around with an arrow stuck in it.

A. This is a pertinent question that I take quite seriously. The potential implications of a wounded deer can negatively affect hunting in general, particularly in a small community like yours. I fully understand and appreciate this concern.

The moral and ethical responsibility of a hunter demands a quick and humane harvest. It is in everyone's best interest for this to occur. To that end, I take several steps to significantly decrease the probability of this occurring. I only take high percentage shots.

This is when an animal is within a close distance, positioned a certain way, and I have a clear shooting lane.

I have been archery hunting for 28 years. In that time I have seen great improvements in the accuracy of archery equipment. I believe that my ethical responsibility, my precautions for a high percentage shot, coupled with the advancements in technology along with my experience will greatly reduce the probability of a wounded deer.

Typically the animal runs or walks off. The animal is given time and not pressured. Sometimes this is several hours. The idea is for the animal to lie down and perish. Studies have shown that the overwhelming majority of deer shot and not recovered by the hunter by an arrow will survive. This is due to the clean incisions made by the arrow tip. This is in contrast to deer shot by a gun. Many of them will perish without being recovered.

Q. How does the hunter track a wounded animal?

A. There are three primary methods of tracking a deer once it has been shot. The first method is to actually watch the deer walk or run off and perish. The second and third method work hand in hand. If the deer wanders off the hunting site (yard), then the deer is tracked by either following a blood trail or deer tracks. When a deer is shot correctly with a bow and arrow, there will be sufficient blood to make tracking an easy procedure.

Q. How often does it happen that a deer has been only wounded and then runs or wanders off wounded?

A. This happens very infrequently. I have not personally had this occur for 6 years. Before that time was another 5 years. Being that deer are a prey animal, they have developed reflexes that have helped them with survival. By taking shots with a powerful, fast bow, while the deer is in the best position and from a short distance, incidents involving wounded deer have been greatly reduced. But there is no iron-glad guarantee that it will never happen.

Q. What happens to the dead deer?

A. It is both unethical and illegal to dispose of deer without using for table fare. The bottom line is that the deer will reach a dinner table somewhere. There are several options given to the landowner as to where the deer will end up:

- 1) They can be processed at a butcher and returned to the landowner.
- 2) They can be consumed by the hunter's family
- 3) They can be given to a local meat locker which processes them for the local food banks.