

# **TEN TIPS FOR A MORE SUCCESSFUL PHEASANT HUNT**

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Let's face it, come November those roosters sure can get smart. No matter how much cover you seem to push, if you happen to be in an area that has been hunted hard throughout the season, a limit of roosters seems to be almost impossible. There are however some things that can make your next upland bird hunting experience a much more successful and enjoyable experience. Listed below are some ideas that have been proven to give you the edge on your next pheasant hunting adventure.

**1. No matter how much cover you push, without a well trained dog by your side you can forget about pumping up a rooster, no matter what state you hunt in. A well trained upland dog can be an invaluable tool for the pheasant enthusiast. What does it take to encourage a young pup to be the next pheasant king? Unlike waterfowl hunters, training an upland dog doesn't take near as extensive of a training program, just the right training. The first thing any hunting dog needs is obedience. You need to be able to call your dog off of a flyer or a runner for that matter. Next is the proper introduction to birds. Most importantly we need to bring out pups natural instincts as young as possible. There is no time too young to introduce your new pup to a wing or dead bird. This will be very important down the road. What comes after that can be learned in many good training books available today. Remember you may be better off starting over right, than trying to fight a lost cause!**

**2. To follow up with hunting over a quality trained hunting dog. There are several factors that can aid your hunting dog into being more successful, thus making you more successful. First off, as most all avid hunters know, it is very important to hunt your dog into the wind when making a pheasant push giving your dog the edge on the birds scent. Next taking your pup to the local game preserve prior to his first hunt of the year can give your pup a push in the right direction as it may take a few times out before pup actually remembers what his job really is. Also keeping your dog hydrated during the hunt, even on a cool day is vital. A good idea is to carry a bottle of water in your vest or at the very least, pick up a gallon of**

water at the gas station when filling up; along with a bowl, which can be often forgotten.

3. Not to beat a dead horse but many hunters have heard about the terribly hot South Dakota opener a couple years back where numerous dogs died of heat exhaustion. Although heat exhaustion is a very dangerous situation, that particular incident may not have been from heat exhaustion as first thought, but from an algae bloom in the lakes and ponds. This can occur on very warm days and is lethal to many animals including dogs and livestock. If you are not aware of this problem, maybe it's time to do a little research. You can detect a lethal algae bloom as the entire lake or pond will turn a hazy blue green especially on the down wind edge. Thus it is very important to keep an eye on what your dog is getting into and to bring an alternate source of water with for them at all times.

4. One thing that tends to get overlooked with inexperienced hunters is to be sure to be as quiet as possible from the time you drive up to the field, until the hunt is complete. Never slam a car door, no matter what time of year you're hunting. If a member of my group ever slams a door, I refuse to hunt that area as they have just educated ever bird within a 1/2 mile that hunters are coming and be assured every rooster in earshot is running for the hills. To take that a step further, it is also very important to be as quite as possible throughout the hunt. Then old adage of yelling to get the birds moving only seems to work back at the game farm....not in the wild!!!

5. Now let's get into some new hunting techniques. Many hunters like to hunt alone, just the hunter, his dog, and the birds. This is a very enjoyable way to hunt but can get frustrating if the birds are wary, won't sit tight and continue to run on you. One way to combat these runners is to pick an area to hunt that gives the hunter the advantage. One way to do this in high water years is to use this water to your advantage. Many times when you start to push the birds into cattail cover, they are nearly impossible to get up if they have their highways already in place. If however, you can push the birds into an area that turns into water they are stuck. As you get within a couple hundred yards of the water cover make a quick sprint for about 50 yards. This will catch the birds off guard and push them right into the trapped area. Then at around 50 to 80 yards out, start to work the area very slowly, zig zag back and forth as these birds are either going to fly or try and double back. This is when you will experience your best success.

6. Now for the group hunters. Obviously larger groups have an advantage in covering larger areas of ground. However even though your hunting in a large group, if you can take advantage of a situation as stated above, your results will increase as well. Especially if you can plan ahead and have one or two hunters who are able to come prepared with hip boots or waders on. This allows the group to get down and dirty with those old school roosters. It is always important to keep safety in mind first, especially when hunting in larger groups, in the thick cover.

7. Another excellent time to hunt roosters is when the weather gets downright nasty. High winds are a pheasant hunter's best friend as the cover makes more natural noise than the hunter. If you are quiet enough, your sounds will get lost in the wind and the birds get edgy. They do not know where you are or where to go and will end up sitting tighter or fly, thus allowing you to get up on them for a closer shot.

**8. If high winds are not enough a full on blizzard is even better yet. Especially the day after. If you get a snowfall of over a foot that is not crusted up, those wiley roosters are unable to run on top of the snow and are forced to sit tight. And be assured they will be in the cattails after a storm like that. A group of hunters can spend all afternoon in an area where there are sure to be birds as they can't go anywhere but up! Don't be afraid to hunt a patch of cover full of birds, two or three times and you can never walk slowly enough.**

**9. The next piece of advice is to try and find out what the birds daily activity routine is. Learn as much about your prey as you can. This will help you decide where you should be hunting during a specific time of day. If at 9:00 am when shooting time starts, you're in the thick cover and your having better luck scrambling after birds that the other guys are pushing out of the corn fields, guess where you should be hunting tomorrow at 9:00 am. That's right, you'll want to be hunting the edges of the corn fields or right in the standing corn instead of in the heavy cover, where you should be hunting right at dusk as the birds move in to roost for the night!**

**10. The last piece of advice to offer the experienced pheasant hunter is when the going gets really tough...think outside the box! Think about what every other hunter out there is doing and try something different. For instance if you have access to a boat, or your area ices up, try and hunt islands near the lake that you have watched birds sail to year after year when they get pushed from the heavy shoreline cover. Or if there is a specific area that never gets hit because it is just too thick, well guess where the birds are. Even if it is too thick to shoot out of, post a couple guys at the end and draw straws to be the grunt for your buddies. The idea is do what nobody else is doing....not what everybody else is doing!!!!**

**Well, hopefully these proven tactics will help you be more successful in the field next fall. Especially on those particularly tough days that seem to come around more often that not in the past few years as public hunting areas seem to keep getting overrun with hunters year after year! And just remember one thing, we need to continue to support our sportsman's groups such as Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited, who are out there adding vital habitat, so that we continue to have places to hunt for the future!**

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