

# Tips for Hunting Rabbits Without a Dog

by Doug Howlett



I won't lie to you—hunting rabbits with a beagle or five is easier than trying to fill a brace of bunnies by going dogless. But then, some things in life are appreciated most when they don't come too easily. While most die-hard Elmer Fudds wouldn't be caught in a thicket without their low-running hounds, for the casual hunter just looking to score some meat for a stew, rabbit country offers the chance for an incredibly fun and productive walk with a 20-gauge tucked over his arm. Follow these strategies to maximize your odds for success, whether going it alone or partnering up for a great hunt.

## Going Solo

Because of the abundance of predators out to get them, rabbits prefer areas where thick cover and ample food are in close proximity. Grown-up borders or thickets immediately next to open crops of soybeans, peanuts, and peas, or food plots lush with clover or turnips or overrun with broadleaf weeds will all harbor a population of cottontails.

So, too, will briar patches and thickets tangled with honeysuckle, blackberries, and blueberries, or brushy ditches and hedgerows. The latter offer some of the easiest shooting if they bisect an open field, as the rabbits will dash into plain sight in an effort to escape.

Ideally, you want to find cover that is no taller than your waist and offers abundant gaps or open areas that rabbits must run through to escape. The open areas not only allow you to better spot fleeing bunnies, but they also offer clearer shots. Keep your shotgun at the ready—when a rabbit runs, it will do so in a blur—and step into the thickest, nastiest stuff you see and zigzag through it stomping around and altering your pace.

Stop, speed up, and then stop again to keep rabbits unsure of what you are doing and where you will go next. Walk 10 to 12 steps, pause for 15 to 20 seconds, then alter your direction, sometimes even circling back through the cover. Always keep your eyes ahead and to the side in anticipation of an escaping rabbit.

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