

The many myths from hunters

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Once again, it is hunting season, time for the myths that abound regarding this blood sport.

Hunters claim that they kill the weak and starving animals, thus helping the population. In actuality, hunters want the biggest and the best, those with a huge rack for the mantle trophy. Diseased animals don't provide much optimal meat and, of course, isn't that what hunting is all about? Nature's own system of balance allows the debilitated, old animals to die out in favor of "survival of the fittest." But when hunters are killing the dominant, healthy animals, the best genes are removed from the herd's gene pool – as are the most experienced individuals – which leaves the population weak. Here are four more hunting myths:

■ Hunting prevents the overpopulation of animals.

Actually, hunting creates an overabundance of animals of a certain species. Nature abhors a vacuum. For example, when a given amount of deer are removed from the herd by hunting, females will have more and bigger litters to fill up the gap.

■ Hunted animals don't suffer.

Wild animals are terrorized by the chase and agonized by the kill. Their families, herds and flocks are disrupted. It is estimated that for every animal a hunter kills and claims, at least two wounded but unrecovered animals die slowly and painfully from blood loss, infection or starvation. Those who don't die can suffer permanent injury. During hunting season, wild animals are more likely to get hit by a vehicle as they flee into the road when hunters walk through their territory.

■ Hunters pay the majority of the tab for conservation.

In reality, wildlife management and conservation programs receive up to 90 percent of their funds from general tax reserves, more than 90 percent of which are paid by non-hunters. Since less than 5 percent of the U.S. population hunts, this contribution is negligible. Every year, thousands of public acres are bulldozed, burned, replanted and otherwise manipulated to kill off non-target species (including natural predators) and attract game species. Animals are also bred or captured to stock hunting and fishing areas.

■ Hunters help feed the homeless by donating meat from their kills.

A recent interesting study by Michael Gregor at Nutritionfacts.org showed that in game meat tested, 80 percent had lead bullet fragments in the samples. Nobody, including the homeless, needs more fat and cholesterol, found in meat, in their diet. More fruits, vegetables and protein from plant sources should be consumed daily.

What can you do to stop hunting? Oppose any legislation, national or local, that establishes higher quotas of animals to be hunted, lengthens hunting seasons, allows new species to be hunted. Speak out against any bills that open more wildlife refuges to hunting. Refuges should protect, not allow animals to be killed. If you own a substantial parcel of land, post it against hunting and trapping.

It is encouraging that every year fewer people hunt in the United States. The state Fish and Game Department's income has decreased considerably, which is why the agency is constantly reaching out to get women, youth and the handicapped to purchase hunting licenses.

Hunting today is unnecessary and is more detrimental to animals and the environment than beneficial. Enjoy wildlife by “hunting” with a camera.

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