



Advisory Announcement

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Deer Hunters Reminded of Bear Hazards

(Sitka) Deer season in Southeast Alaska is in full swing with hunters reporting high success rates. However, hunters are cautioned about the temptation to be too successful. Hunters should think twice about harvesting more than one deer at a time or caching a deer in the field to continue hunting.

Last month a Sitka hunter was fatally mauled by a brown bear while retrieving part of a deer he had harvested the previous day. Other hunters this season have reported caching deer so they could continue hunting, only to return and find their harvest claimed by bears. While many bears have entered their dens to hibernate, hunters are reporting tracks and fresh sign in many areas. It is not unusual for some bears to remain active into December.

Brown bears are in hyperphagia right now, an intense period of feeding in order to pack on pounds for a long winter's sleep. Finding a deer carcass is a bonanza which a bear may aggressively defend.

Hunters are urged to field dress and pack their trophy back to transportation as soon as possible. The longer a deer is left in the field, the more likely a bear will find it. Also, deer left ungutted are more prone to meat spoilage, even with cooler winter temperatures.

It is recommended hunters not cache deer in the field. However, if you do you should follow these precautions:

- Move deer away from the gut pile, at least 100 yards.
- Take a GPS waypoint at the cache, so you know you are getting close when you return and need to be extra cautious.
- **Hang in an area of high visibility where you can see it from a safe distance.** When you return, make noise, approach the cache upwind and make your presence known. Have your firearm ready.
- Hang the deer as high as possible (>15'). This requires having the necessary gear (ropes, block and tackle). Leaving a piece of clothing nearby will leave human scent in the area.

While procuring venison for the year is a vital part of the lifestyle of many Southeast Alaskans, returning safely from the hunt should always be the number one priority. Being mindful of bears is a necessary precaution that can't be overlooked.