

Deer Hunter Ethics

Dr. Dale Rollins- Texas Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist

You never get a second chance to make a first impression." -- Will Rogers

Deer season is just around the corner. Soon some 700,000 hunters will be afield in pursuit of the popular white-tailed deer. Some will take their son or daughter along to continue a legacy of companionship their father or grandfather initiated.

Many will bring home a trophy, or at least a trophy-sized tale, and be a credit to the hunting fraternity. Others will offer a less glowing testimony that speaks loudly and negatively about hunting and hunters.

As a hunter, have you ever observed a deer hunter engaging in some unsavory behavior that resulted in you having a poor impression of that particular hunter or perhaps of hunters in general? Picture this scenario: It's the Monday after opening weekend and Hill Country highways are stacked with deer hunters headed back to places like Dallas, San Antonio and Houston. The afternoon temperature is in the low 80s as the caravan of urban hunters heads back from 'Opening Weekend'. Look closely and you're likely to see one or more deers' legs protruding from the back of that 4X4 that just passed you. Wonder how that venison is going to taste by the time it's on the road for another five hours? Or, how does that small buck look strapped to the hood of that muddy Suburban over there? Reckon how many good impressions 'ol Bubba' and his 'buds' will make by the time they roll into their Houston suburb?"

An exaggeration? Not necessarily! Spend a November weekend in Llano or Junction or Cotulla or a hundred other towns in Texas. Try to view what you see from the perspective of a non-hunter. Pulling into a convenience store along Interstate 10 in Sonora, there was a motor home with eight mule deer dangling from the luggage rack like so many Christmas tree ornaments. Obviously those guys were proud of their success, but would one question whether that was the best way to tout it. Those guys were ambassadors for everyone else associated with hunting. And they didn't send a positive message.

Many colleagues needlessly throw gasoline on a fire that animal activists are more than eager to stoke. Sometimes we do things without thinking how they would be taken by the non-hunting majority. We then wonder why hunting often has a black eye."

The video "*Deer hunting: focus on ethics*" was completed several years ago. The video has been used extensively in hunter education classes for youth. In reality, it's target audience

was older hunters, those who should certainly *know* better, and probably would *do* better if they knew how their actions looked to others - especially non-hunters.

The video is available for \$20 per copy from Texas Cooperative Extension by calling 979-845-6471 or online at www.tcebookstore.org.