

## Stand Placement is Critical

With hunting season just around the corner, now is the time to make some last minute blind adjustments that will ensure better success this hunting season.

First, let's assume we are talking about elevated tower blinds so common throughout the Texas landscape these days. A comfortable elevated box blind will help conceal your movements and your scent while providing optimum visibility and a stable shooting rest. Blind placement is critical, but so are the mechanics of a good box blind. The first order of business is pretty obvious—make it large enough to be comfortable and enclosed enough to conceal your movements. Honestly, camo clothing is not required to hunt elevated box blinds, but everyone does it. Second, the window size and arrangement is critical for optimum visibility. If the windows are too high from top to bottom, your body movements will be visible from afar. The height of the windows should be just enough to allow your scoped rifle easy access without hitting the frame. The length of the windows should offer a nice panoramic view of your surroundings so that you are not constantly shifting your body from side to side to peer outside. Windows that are long, skinny rectangles offer maximum visibility and concealment with minimum movement by the observer.

Having a dark background behind you also maximizes movement concealment and will keep you from being silhouetted by wary game. Sitting in front of the latched door, tucking into the corner or the use of dark fabric curtains will help in these regards. Having a comfortable chair sounds too simple, but you might be surprised how many people still use five gallon buckets and rejected deer camp chairs in their blinds. A good quality chair will allow you to sit motionless and quieter much longer and therefore improve your chances for success. The chair height must also be coordinated with the window height to maximize visibility and minimize movement as well. And finally, considerations of WHO is to hunt with you are important. If you plan to have others in the blind with you, they too will need space, concealment and a quality chair and it must meet their height requirements when it comes time to shoot out the windows. It doesn't make sense to do everything right only to realize the hunter must sit on someone's lap or on six phone books in order to get a shot off. These simple steps will make the hunt much more enjoyable and successful for everyone.

Blind placement is one of the most overlooked segments of deer hunting I regularly encounter. When selecting a location, don't think like a human, but like that of a deer. Oftentimes, placing the blind for convenience is much different than placing it where it may offer the best chance for success. Deer, particularly mature bucks, use travel corridors -- edges, drainages, creeks, tree lines and other screening covers to get from one place to the next. Outside of the rut and the brief lapse of intelligence, mature bucks stick close to such landscape features to offer maximum concealment as they travel. A well placed blind will be able to observe these corridors, perhaps more than one simultaneously, at a safe enough distance to avoid detection by the quarry yet offering a high percentage shot.

Placing the blind too close to travel or feeding locations such as feeders or food plots will disrupt the animal's daily routine and minimize success significantly. Feeders should offer protective cover to and from them as well. Feeders in the wide open offer no such protection and create deer activity only under the cover of darkness.

Obviously, prevailing wind direction must also be taken into consideration. Cross or down wind from travel and feeding areas will ensure the best chance of success and such locations must only be hunted when the winds are favorable. Hunting these locations when the winds are "not right" will only educate the animals and make them more wary of the area. Outside of the rut, most mature bucks will approach a feeding location downwind to scent-check the area for danger and for hot does before exposing themselves. If your blind is too close to the feeder, the buck will approach downwind of you as well as the feeder and you will be busted. If your blind is too far, you won't be able to make an accurate shot. Since "how far is too far" is highly variable, try to take into account your actual abilities and place the blind as far away from the feeder as you can confidently make the shot.

An often overlooked part of deer blinds is anchoring them to the ground. The winds are not always calm in Texas, so making sure your blind will be there next hunting season is a must. Tie-downs, anchors, guy wires, concrete posts and t-posts are required to not only keep your blind upright, they will also help keep the blind steady when the moment of truth arrives and you have to make the shot.

There is an unwritten rule among ethical hunters and landowners that states that no hunting blind will be placed along property lines. The appropriate distance requires common sense based on topography, habitat, line-of-sight and shooting direction. The same holds true for feeder placement. No neighboring landowner should be able to see your feeders or blinds and you should not be able to see theirs. If your property is small and irregular shaped, hunt only the center and perhaps a tower blind is not for you. If your property is large, concentrate on travel corridors away from the boundary line and out of sight of the neighbors. Common sense and blind location not only makes hunting a safer and more enjoyable sport, but makes for much better neighbors as well.

Macy Ledbetter

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