

Basics of Scenting

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The concept of using scent as a deterrent is based on the predator's olfactory system being far superior to ours.

Many say that you must manage your attractants as not to attract the predators. This statement supports the first statement's concept.

It seems the major talking point to many, is bone yards. Many believe that they are the biggest concern and attractant. My thought is that our cattle themselves are the attractant. Even by removing the bone yards, our true risk still remains, our cattle. My concerns are the cattle, this effort is to deter a predator's presence from them.

I spent a couple of years learning trapping skills from a retired Federal Trapper. The ranch I was managing was losing calves to several different species but, probably the ones that accounted for most of the losses was feral dogs and coyotes, canines.

We would produce a scent as an attractant. It was effective but, stink doesn't quite describe its powerful aroma. Each time you set traps you wore the same coverings. Using the scent in setting the trap. Being very careful not to foul the set with an odor or mistake that gave away the set to the predator.

What I quickly realized was that it is easier to foul a set, than to set an effective one.

This was the basis for choosing scent as a deterrent. If you can foul a set easier than setting an effective set, it means the predators are extremely sensitive and would be very responsive to a scent deterrent.

I have written previously about the levels of fear and fears response of fight or flight, all of which are based in instinctual reactions. The instinct of fear creates reaction rather than a thought process. By presenting an unfamiliar scent we engage an instinctual response.

It is also important to keep the scent engaging the response to fear, so that we engage the response of flight, simply asking the predators to move on.

In Order to keep the scent engaging the response of fear, we must keep it as an unsolvable riddle. In order to do that, we must prevent the predator from being aware of its placement.

Placing the scent should be done with as much thought as placing a camera or a trap set. We don't want to compromise the scent by placing it with one of nature's familiar scents or even one of man's.

Scent within the animal kingdom is powerful. A patriarch wolf will mark the boundaries of his pack's territory by marking the perimeters. He alerts other wolves "this is mine". By scenting our area we are simply stating "this is ours".

Don't place it low enough that the predators can contact it.

Do not pour it on the ground.

Both of these actions give the predators an opportunity to discover where the scent is coming from. That awareness eliminates the riddle, disengaging the instinct of self preservation and fears response of fight or flight.

That awareness then has become a desensitizing event, creating comfort and a reason to stick around. Place the scent high in the breeze, preferably not on green wood, or sap wood, nor treated posts. The placement must allow the scent



A good scenting base/ dead wood

to remain a solitary scent that is strange and new. Not a combination of understandable scents that are commonly understood in nature.

I have previously written about the Detering Scent being a Manufactured Scent and used in its concentrated form. They are affordable and readily available in any grocery stores cleaner or detergent isle. They are completely foreign to a natural environment.

I was told about a situation that happened at a zoo. The zoo ran into a problem with its newly acquired wolves. They bunched in an outside corner of the pen and would not come to food or water. After many opinions and suggestions someone stopped using the cleaner that the staff was washing the pens out with on a daily basis, and in a short time, the wolves were back to normal. The scent had a response, that response was fear brought on by the scent of the cleaner.

Changing the location and the scent every week to ten days you are constantly presenting a new and unfamiliar scent. Presenting an ever changing deterrent. Never allowing the predators to become accustomed to a specific scent.

When selecting a site for placement, it is a good idea to understand your local weather. Let's say that a breeze usually comes up in the afternoon and it usually comes from the West. The application of the scent will be much more effective if placed on the west side of the range. Allowing the breeze to disperse it to the east side and across the range.

Realize that weather isn't always consistent, so applications must be applied within your parameters around a ½ to 1 mile apart.

Moisture, via rain, only reactivates aging scents, and presents an onslaught of scent deterrent that was previously applied. Drought dries the scent and weakens it's dispersement. Staying on a scheduled routine is recommended.

When we look at our range, and we are determining placements, it's important to understand the geographical parameters and how and where predators are traveling. If you are in a corridor where the predators are traveling to a destination such as a water source or another attraction, it may require a staggered placement to encourage them to seek an alternate route.

Manmade roads do work as game trails. They're often placed where they are placed because an engineer found it to be the easiest and shortest route to a destination. The same principle works for the predators.

The roads also have an attractant value to the predators. People being people, throw or lose items from their vehicles. Maybe a partial piece of sandwich, or a beer can. The vehicles also supply another item, road kill. These are all attractants to predators. Making the roads a very commonly used predator route.

Game trails that cross man made roads are an intersection of travel patterns for the predators. What they sense at these intersections determines their direction. If you determine where these intersections are in relation to the range that you are trying to deter presence on, you can place a scent marker for the trail that detours the predator from your direction.

The roads are an attractant, but remember that when we place an attractant in a trap set, that trap is easily fouled by a Deterring scent. Deterring Scents create a reaction of instinctual responses which overpowers simple desires.

The most important factor for deterrents is not allowing them to become familiar. By allowing familiarity you desensitize a reaction. Such repetition (not changing the scent routinely) engages desensitization and it is the basis for habitualization.

If you can't effectively re-apply scent within a seven to ten day window of application, don't choose scenting as a deterrent.

It is important to keep the scent placements ever changing, both in the placement's location, and the actual scent. If you used a fabric softener last, apply a cleaner the next time.

I don't purchase gallons, I prefer the smaller bottles offered at the discount stores. It maybe that I'm a cheapskate, but more importantly is that the supply runs out quickly and I can change to another scent direction, keeping the placements ever changing, fresh and unfamiliar to the predators.

Sometimes the placements seem to be hindered by not having a reasonable spot to apply the scent. One of the most common problems is the only thing I have to place scent on is a barb wire fence, or that the fence's braces are treated posts or pipe braces having no clean wood, or anything for the scent to soak into.

Although I prefer a higher placement, the fence will be used rather than placing no deterrent at all. I will use a wick that will hold the scent. That wick is a strip of fabric, an old sock, a handkerchief, a strip of old Levi's any thing that can be wrapped around the top wire. I like the strip to be about 4 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches long. I like to cut a split, length wise on one end, then stabbing the other end on a barb and wrapping it on itself on the wire, then using the split end to tie the wick. By presoaking the wick lightly in the scent deterrent before wrapping it onto the wire you eliminate the chance of over application and spillage. Presenting an unsolvable riddle.



Scenting with a wick

Upon the reapplication, don't pour the new deterrent on the old wick. But, leave the old wick so it has the opportunity to be reactivated on a rain event. Apply a new wick for the new application, placing it approximately a ½ to 1 mile away from the other scent.

The wick method can also be used if only live trees or brush exist. The best item I have found is a sock that lost its mate, or cheap socks purchased at the discount store. Place a wrapped up scented wick inside the sock and tie the sock in the green tree, hanging, not touching the brush or the tree.

These are both options to place the scent deterrents.



By placing a scent deterrent for a while, my observation is that I have noticed a significant reduction in tracks and scat.

Another thing I have observed is the change in avian presence. It seems as if magpies, ravens and buzzards have been absent from the areas that I have been presenting the deterrent in.

Some avian species seem to have a symbiotic relationship to predators. It seems as if those birds operate as scouts for the predators. A beacon that says to the predators “come here.”

While demonstrating a howling wolf to a group, we soon had a response. The response was Ravens, several appearing, and staying at the location for a brief time.

I don't believe in coincidences, especially in animal behavior. I believe more in the probability that a response is a reaction to an action. We just fit the word coincidences in, because we didn't see or connect the action to the reaction.

One idea is that scenting has deterred the predator's presence and by doing so, we have also deterred the avian presence. Although we are dealing with our specific range and those specific parameters, the avian absence poses a question of how far are we Deterring presence.

The wolf that came to California, the famous OR7, was from the North Eastern corner of Oregon. He was trapped and collared there. His response was to line out to new country, a response of flight which brought him to California. Did the trapping and collaring engage a response of fear, or was his journey to California simply a coincidence?

The degree of a response to a stimulus is itself an unknown, we don't know the degree of fear that we present. Scenting though, has been an effective solution for deterring presence.

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