

WILD SHEEP FROM AN ECONOMIC AND CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

By
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Good morning. I'm very pleased to be here. Basically I'm going to speak on the consumer's view on sheep, and also I have some slides on sheep hunting and some other types of hunting throughout the world to use as a basis of comparison so you can see how other types of hunting compare with sheep hunting. After the slides I have some other material to present.

Slide presentation (given to hunters to give them some idea of what they're getting into).

This has to do with all game, basically Africa. I'm going to read something concerning Africa: Eland are almost exterminated and are on the protected list. In Ngorongoro no game such as impala. I never saw a dik-dik or elephants. The authorities refused a license to shoot an elephant in Mt. Kenya. Arthur Neuman, another hunter, describes his fruitless trek from Mombasa to the Tana through a particular area - there was no game. We saw too many people crossing the Tana, which is one of the best elephant areas there are. There was hardly any game. I saw only one bush buck in all my trip - 14 months. At the foot of Mt. Kenya there is hardly any game besides elephant. I only saw three giraffe, a small herd of zebra and two lions. I bagged two eland and I never set sight on a single buffalo. The reinderpest epidemic, the buffalo are now nearly extinct. The spoor of the white buffalo is a rarity, ...but this article, I'll bet you thought it was written today - it was written in 1890 so nothing has really changed too much. Everyone thinks that Africa is a game paradise, always has been and always will be. This is not so, they have the same problems we have here.

Another article I cut out of a newspaper - it was released April 7: elephant hunting is banned in Kenya. The hunting is deteriorating, the poaching is increasing. Actually almost the same article as the one written in 1890. The problems and situations as you can see are the same there as they are here, it is no different.

Now we're going to cover some points concerning sheep. For instance, what does a sheep license cost throughout the world and what does sheep hunting cost? Well, here in Montana for those who are unaware of it, our license for a nonresident is \$151 plus \$50 for a sheep license. If you go to Alaska the license is \$20 for the initial license and \$150 for the sheep. You go to British Columbia and it's \$75 for your initial license and \$250 for the sheep. Now as a basis of comparison where the licenses are high, if you go to Kenya to shoot an elephant you pay \$750 for the elephant plus \$6 a pound for all the ivory under 70 pounds and \$11 if it is over 100 pounds, so an elephant could cost you \$3,000. If you go to Botswana to hunt lion the license itself costs \$780, so I can assure you that the cost of licenses and hunting throughout the world is far more than you realize.

If any license increases that we have here, to buy more game habitat, etc. are opposed by anyone who says it's too much, they don't really know what they are talking about. As far as what you pay on a sheep hunt, the most expensive

hunt you can go on is in Mongolia - the cost to hunt there, on the border of China on the Gobi Desert is a minimum of \$400 a day with a minimum of 10 days. If you go higher into the mountains of Mongolia, the cost of the hunt is \$800 a day with a minimum of 14 days plus all your travel and other expenses.

Now another point people ask about concerning sheep is how much time does sheep hunting take. Do people want to spend a lot of time (from the consumer's view)? Some people have peculiar ideas about this. If you go for a Dall sheep, 10 days is considered the proper length of time. Fourteen days is the proper time to hunt stone sheep. Bighorns should be selectively taken in 10 days. When you ask these sheep hunters what size ram they want they state they want a decent ram. I don't know what a decent ram is, but they seem to think it is something between 38 and 40 inches, which is kind of a myth. I can tell you this from experience, that the third time a man climbs a mountain he'll shoot any damn ram he sees. It's a hate killing after that.

After 7 days of hunting the man's spirit is broken - the status seeker or to some extent the mixed-bag hunter, who, after 7 days gives up on sheep then goes after other game. The avid hunter will go on and on. The unfortunate thing is that too many biologists (in my opinion) and too many game departments give in to the unhappy man. One man bitches and it automatically makes it bad for the rest of them, because of one complaint.

People say they don't see enough big sheep and there aren't enough old sheep. Besides arranging hunting trips, I have a taxidermy business. At one time we had 26 employees, so it was a pretty fair-sized place. This was several years ago. I kept track of 500 rams that came through our place, and of the 500 rams (this is all kinds of sheep taken from everywhere), 10 percent were over 8 years old. Ninety percent were 8 years or younger. Only 1 percent reached 39 inches or more, so 38 and 40 inch sheep are a myth - they just seldom get that long.

All animals have a magic number. Moose is 60 inches, goats is 10 inches, antelope is 16 inches. All brown bears should be 10 foot, all grizzly bears should be 9 feet. With sheep it is 40 inches. Most people feel they've got to get a 40 inch sheep and it's just not possible, there aren't very many 40 inch sheep. However, I think the trend is going the other way, because I hear more people saying that they're happy with just a nice adult sheep or a nice full curl ram which is not too difficult to get as far as Dall or stone sheep go. Most of the sheep that we get in now are older sheep - they're 8-9 years old. Very few 9. They seem to be between 34-36 inches. They probably weren't going to get any older.

There's a lot of people who seem to indicate that the bighorn sheep hunting is done. We're going to discuss this in the Boone and Crockett syndrome this afternoon. I will mention it now to give you something to think about. Of the last 5000 Dall sheep that were shot in Alaska, 17 made the record book. There have been way less bighorns shot, but there are 19 bighorn sheep in the record book, so theoretically even though they're under more pressure, bighorns are doing better than Dalls as far as records go.

We have a very emotional situation over sheep. A lot of people believe there is a lot more poaching than there actually is. I don't believe it.

I believe it is about one third as much - I believe that each illegally taken sheep is heard about two or three times. I read recently that someone said there are 300 rams legally killed in the U. S. each year and the illegal kill is many times that. To me that would mean 1,000 rams were killed a year illegally. I can't quite swallow that, and I think it is misleading and it's making the hunter look like he's somewhat of a poacher. Sometimes I wonder if a lot of people or magazines aren't too eager to sell short stories and get their points across. Maybe they are just badly worded. Maybe the writers have guilt complexes. It could be that the material is not as factual as it could be. It's very disturbing to me and very disturbing to the public who don't really understand what real hunting is. There's probably some truth to all of it, too, but I think that this should be brought up in this meeting. I would like to see more facts condensed to where I can understand them and I can give them to other people.

I would like to see more biologists and more fish and game departments start fighting back instead of turning the other cheek. Sometimes this is a little on the hard side, but I have met a few biologists who sometimes forget who is paying their wages. Actually the hunter is paying the bill, and we should be given first consideration. Remember that the hunter pays 11 percent excise tax on sporting goods, yet 11 times more nonhunters benefit from this money than the hunters do. We're paying for the rest of them. I don't think we should let the public, actually only a few individuals, sway us on minor issues and hunting policy. I'm afraid this is the trend that people are giving in to too quickly. There are some people who suggest that many ex-hunters or other individuals are interested in photography safaris. This is a falacy.

It doesn't exist. Few will pay for a photo hunt. If you would, I would book the trip. Few people will pay money to go on photography trips. Very few outfitters are successful in the summertime because they can't get people to pay any money to go back into the mountains. Very few outfitters are filling up.

Actually, all you'd need for a photo trip would be one of each species of wild animals, available in an area, standing near a road - just keep them good and tame and with a good background. People who want to take pictures won't walk and the animal has to be tame. You can hardly take a photograph of an animal back in the wilderness - they're too wild and the average man hasn't the ambition or ability to try and get closer. What they want for a photographic trip the national parks provide adequately. Too much of this seems to be based on 10 percent fact and 90 percent emotion. It should be the other way around.

Here's something else interesting, and it scares me as a consumer. I'm interested in endangered species and whether or not they're going to be put on or taken off an endangered list. Leopards a couple years ago were put on an endangered species list. I personally wrote to five game departments in Africa and all of them denied that leopards were endangered and the minister from Kenya wrote back and said that Americans should mind their own business. In December 1973 the president signed a new endangered species bill which supposedly will allow legally taken leopard skins into the U. S. The Department of Interior has never implemented the law, as it will take \$200,000 to write the new regulations and they don't have the money. According to this

bill (it's difficult to understand), bureaucrats really have no authority to decide which laws they will enforce. This is why I'm concerned about sheep and other animals. If they are put on these lists they'll never be taken off.

In this same bulletin it says, "Public hunting on national refuges, July 1973. The Department of Interior has decided to overrule the traditional policy toward hunting on national wildlife refuges." The new policy states flatly that providing hunting opportunity is no longer in any way an obligation. That just might be of interest to you.

I have something here I want to read - I'm concerned about kids - this is from the Weekly Reader. You've all read the Weekly Reader. It mentioned at first there were only a few examples of endangered animals. Then it stated, "Hunters have been the big reason for the drop in numbers of tigers and horned desert animals. The skins and horns make very fine trophies." Then at the end are questions - "Large numbers of horned desert animals have been killed off by (fill in the blank)?" I would like to see, and I think everyone would like to see, more good wildlife management education of the young. This is where it starts.

I would like to share with you some of the unusual stories and letters I have received in past years:

One time we had a hunter from Washington, New Jersey. His name was Zimmerman. He wanted to come to Montana to shoot an elk so he came and the first time he was here he brought seven duffle bags. This made it a little difficult for the guide - when he came back the guide told him not to bring so many duffle bags. The guy didn't get an elk, so he came back. Next time he arrived he had 16 pairs of boots and 7 Weatherby rifles to pack into the mountains. One hunter and one guide. Very difficult hunting. Every time the guide would show the client an elk he would miss it, so finally they saw a goat on a mountainside and he had a goat permit so he started to shoot at the goat at 9 a.m. and he fired his last shot at 1 in the afternoon. The goat wouldn't leave his sheer rock and kept wandering back and forth. He shot 80 times at it and never hit the goat. Finally the guide took him back to camp and this went on for two weeks. The guide was becoming very exasperated with the client, so finally he said, "Zimmerman, you are the world's worst hunter. I can't stand you any longer. Get on a horse, we're leaving." Right in the middle of the road there's a big bull elk and right beside the elk is a pass with some heavy timber. Zimmerman's last chance was right there. The guide told him to go in the pass and he would scare the elk past him and he could shoot him. The elk had moved down and was running really fast when he went through the pass and Zimmerman still didn't get an elk and Ray took him out.

I get a lot of letters asking questions - a man once said, "The first 8 days of the hunt you arranged for me were very good, but the last day of the hunt the guide became very disturbed. He took my horse away from me and he made me walk back to camp. It was 12 miles." I asked the guide, "Why did you take his horse away?" The guide said, "Because he shot my horse." This is all true.

Four clients came one time and we arranged a hunt. They took three 6-point bulls, but they told me if I couldn't find a better place for them to hunt next year I could take them off the list of my satisfied clients.

Here's a letter that says, "There will be some confusion with a batch of horns and heads that will arrive at your taxidermy shop. I saw my partner switch tags so he would get the bigger sheep."

"Dear Mr. Atcheson - please send me any spare heads and horns you have. I hear you're rich and hunt all over the world."

"Dear Mr. Atcheson - I don't believe you any more. You said this was a good area. I did get 18 trophies in 21 days, but expected to get a larger elk and you misled me and I think I'm going to bring suit against you."

"You are a murderer. You and your friends kill animals. I wish animals would kill people. I hope all hunters kill each other. I hope that they or I could kill you. My teacher told me to write. We believe in live and let live."

"Dear Mr. Atcheson - can you get me a discount on a license? I hear you have pull in the game department."

"We've been planning this hunt for a long time and it means a lot to us. I'm sure you understand. We're both over 60 and probably won't be able to go again. If you'll put up a \$5,000 bond and guarantee we'll get all the game we want we'll send you a deposit."

"I'm really sorry about what happened, but when I shot I thought it was an elephant. I didn't know it was a safari car."

"I want to hunt in Africa with a spear. Down our way I'm noted for killing pigs by jumping on their backs. I'd like to send you some photographs."

"I would like to go on a safari. I'm 28 years old. I will try very hard and I'm willing to do my part. I really can't afford to go, but I'm told that I'm a very attractive woman. Do you know anyone interested?"

"You are a bastard. You tell my husband where to hunt and he leaves me for some stupid animal."

I have quite a collection, and some we really can't read.

You people here and the hunters are supposed to know more than the general public does about wildlife management, so I think that more facts instead of emotion should be used as a basis for open and closed seasons. I want everybody to fight back. I hope everybody will leave this meeting with more desire to back up what you say to the public, thus protecting hunting.

Thank you.