

## Lessons learned from Public Land Pronghorn Hunts

1. Antelope have at least 6 power (6x) vision. You will not fool their eyes. You may fool their ears and nose, but you will not their eyes.
2. If you're going to hunt out of a blind, set it over a well-used water hole 5 days before you intend to hunt it.
3. Walk around your blind – if possible at the time of day you believe you'll kill the antelope – because of the lighting and sun angles at that time of day – then look into your blind with binoculars to see what you can see – if you can see it with binoculars – they can too. Make the appropriate adjustments.
4. If bucks have NOT been pressured and the conditions are right during the rut they can be challenged with decoys and they will respond. When they respond they will come in muzzleloader range, maybe if you're very lucky they'll come in bow range.
5. Knee pads are a great idea, because the cover is usually very low, sometimes full of cactus and other things that sting and bite.
6. Local hunters cover a whole lot of ground by driving. They're using the correct system, but if you're used to stalking and covering ground on foot it will seem foreign, get used to it. Also, if you try to work a buck on foot, sometimes truck hunters will not see you and will inadvertently screw up your hunt by driving in on your buck. Meaning, if they see a truck parked or following a buck, they'll realize you're stalking or working a buck. If they just see a buck and no truck, they might just drive up on it rapidly until it's too late when you pop up out of the brush and wave your arms in frustration.
7. Unless your rifle hunting and are a proficient long range show, there's so much land to cover that simply walking is almost worthless in very open terrain, like the flat prairie in the Comanche National Grasslands. The antelope will always see you first in that terrain and when they start running, they're gone.
8. Blinds on the prairie are subject to high winds. Well-made tent pegs and extra tent pegs are important. Also, go ahead and put your guy-lines out and tent peg them down. I've had a

- blind completely blown away. The wind blew so hard it ripped the tent peg loops out of the bottom of the blind and it went rolling across the prairie.
9. Sitting all day in a blind is hot work. Water to drink, water to pour over your head and a receptacle to pee in is a must. Also, a small cloth to wipe your forehead and sweat helps to keep your shootin' eye clear and ready.
  10. Rehearse your shot sequence from inside the blind, doesn't matter if it's a bow, muzzleloader or rifle – rehearsing the shot will make it easier when the buck of your dreams comes in and your adrenaline is red lining.
  11. Food on an all-day sit can be a challenge. It that it's hard to eat and hard to remember to eat, because it's so hot. If you're okay with drinking electrolytes then that's a good idea, but you must take in nutrients. The midday heat in a blind will be robbing you of much more than the water you're sweating out.
  12. DO NOT get out of the blind when there are antelope in the area. It's tempting to try to slide out of the door when a buck moves around behind the blind, but there's a 99% chance they will see you. You must be disciplined to stay in the blind and not give yourself away – wait for the antelope to move into your shooting lanes. They're so fast and cover so much ground that they could be over the horizon and back in 5 min. Patience kills.
  13. If you're working on a big buck, get into the blind before sunrise and stay in the blind until after sunset. Antelope are not very active after dark and before sunrise, so use that to your advantage.
  14. If you have the terrain to make effective stalks then you should play the sunlight like most fols play the wind on other species. Again, pronghorn are not that sensitive to smell, but they are ultrasensitive to what they see. If you put a big buck to bed at sunset and know where he's at in general, he should be close when the sun comes up. Move as far east of where you last saw the buck as the terrain allows and you are comfortable. Just as soon as the sun comes up behind you start moving slowly to the west looking for your buck. When the sun is low in the sky on the prairie it's almost blinding to look east. If you're hunting west with the sunrise behind you, you'll have about an hour with a distinct advantage.

15. Bugs like blinds on the prairie – don't let it freak you out.
16. Snakes like the warmth of the blind – when you approach it to get into it shake it and make sure you don't hear the tell-tale rattle of a diamondback.
17. The prairie is also home of the tarantula. They migrate in southeastern Colorado in early to mid-October and when you see it – it is impressive.
18. Waterholes are always a place where antelope will be based on weather and heat. But they will use particular water holes. Just because a water hole or stock tank looks good to you, doesn't mean they like it. You must do up close reconnaissance of every water hole you find. There's no explaining why they like one and won't use another one.
19. Comfort in a blind is key if you're going to sit all day. A book, games on your phone, whatever it takes to sit still and keep you occupied is something to consider.
20. Antelope are small animals and easy to carry and butcher, but quite often the weather is hot. You should have a plan to manage your meat, hide and horns to ensure they're cooled down quickly.
21. In some western states archery antelope season opens up in August. A very effective way to plan your hunting season is to roll an archery antelope hunt into the opening week of archery elk. Late August through early September back to back, antelope to elk, hunts have served me very well. And I'm usually sitting water on both hunts – it's not as exciting as spot and stalk or calling in bulls, but it's effective.