

Black Bear Bowhunting Alberta, Canada with Mike's Outfitting

FAQs

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1. What is your success rate?

Almost every hunter could kill 2 bears but we strive to shoot mature male bears and not shoot females, especially sows of breeding age. This does reduce the overall number of kills but it has also kept our bear hunting just as good as it was when we started in 1992. Our actual kill success over that time, including wounded bears has averaged about 125 to 150%.

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2. What is the average bear size taken?

This is a difficult question in that many hunters are happy to shoot smaller bears especially if it is a colored bear or their first bear but I would say the average has been around a 6 ft square hide bear, weighing an honest spring weight of 200 to 250 lbs. You do have an excellent chance of shooting a bear quite a bit bigger than that, or even one more than twice that size.

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3. What are the best dates to come on a hunt? Could I get hit with snow early or have lots of rubbed up bear hides and tons of bugs later?

We can run our bear hunts from April 15 to June 15 and we have picked the best dates, May 10 to June 10. How good the hunting will be really all depends on weather you get for your hunt and whether the spring is late or early. Snow is more likely a problem on the early hunts which slows activity but hot days are more likely on the late hunts which also slows things down. Bugs are not a problem with the Thermacell burners.

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4. Do you get many colored bears?

Yes, there are about 25% colored bears at birth in the population but by the time they reach maturity it is about 15%. If a colored bear is your goal we can target colored bears with our trail cameras.

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5. What do you use for bait and what kind of baiting system do you use?

This is probably the most important and often overlooked element of having a great hunt, the details of what an outfitter does here is vitally important to the success of your hunt. We have experimented with all kinds of baiting systems using every imaginable type of bait. We have found that the best method is with a large volume and variety of bait that never runs out. We use meat; pork and beef, oats, cooking grease, candy, honey and beaver carcasses. At every site we have two 50 gallon barrels and a wire mesh cage. One barrel is filled to the top with small meat scraps and the other one is filled with the oats, grease, candy and honey. Both barrels have small holes cut in the top to limit how quickly they can empty the barrel and they have to take turns eating. When you have 20+ bears at a bait like we sometimes do you have to slow down the eating somehow or they might clean it out. The small holes also stop ravens from eating all the meat. The wire mesh cage is for the beaver carcass. It is chained to a tree and it allows the bears to rip pieces of beaver meat off the carcass but never walk away with the skeleton. The final vitally important item is a crib

system that positions the bear for a perfect broadside shot. Bears cannot eat at our baits without giving the essential shot that a bowhunter needs.



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6. Do you have any way to help me judge a bear's size, or sex? I don't want to accidentally shoot a small bear or sow?

Yes, we have a practically foolproof and simple system of judging what a mature, 5+ yr old boar looks like compared to all the others, especially how it differs from a large breeding age female of the same body weight. At every bait site we have a log lying on the ground that is cut to a certain length. A sow will never be as long as that log from nose to butt. A good size, or for bowhunters a Pope and Young class boar, will be as long as that log or longer. It is that simple. Tips about things like little, round ears, a crease on the head, a hanging belly are all subjective and confusing for a novice or even experienced bear hunter and contribute to many sows being accidentally killed. A big older, breeding sow can have many of the same looking characteristics as an old boar but they will never have the body length of a big old boar. If you want a big male bear, body length is the best way to judge it. We also have dozens of trail camera pictures that we can show you and go over every detail of what a sow looks like compared to a boar.

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7. Do you use trail cameras?

Yes and they are a huge help in taking mature boars and colored bears. In fact, they give you the absolute confidence you need to be patient and not just shoot a small bear because you don't even know if there is a good one around.

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8. Can I get a bait that no one has hunted?

Yes you can but it is generally not necessary. We always keep hunters on what we believe to be the best bait sites every day. Sometimes it is where no one has hunted yet or it can be a bait that has already had a couple kills on it. With our trail camera use we can really pin down what are the best baits to hunt.

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9. If I come on the later hunts won't all the baits be shot up?

No we have so many bait sites that we always have great baits for every single hunter no matter when you hunt.

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10. How far do we have to travel to get to the baits? How do we access them?

We get to every bait by truck and then by four wheeler. The trips from the lodge right to the bait site are as short as a 5 minute trip up to just over an hour. No four wheeler rides are longer than 20 minutes.

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11. How far are the shots? What kind of stands do you use?

All our baits are set up for a 15 to 20 yard shot from a sturdy, permanent, wooden stand that is only 12 feet off the ground. This gives the perfect shot angle for a bowhunter and allows the less mobile, overweight or older hunter to get up in the stand. We never over hunt or shoot too many bears from any one stand so the bears never shy away from our big stands either.



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12. Do you have a wound policy?

Yes we do, you are allowed to shoot 2 bears wounded or killed. A wound is drawing blood. This policy may seem harsh, strict to some hunters especially if it is just a flesh wound but we put a ton of time, effort and money into every bait and we only have so many shooter bears hitting our baits every year. Even if you only flesh wound a bear he most likely won't be back, at least not that year so we have to limit how often that happens. It just wouldn't be fair to the next week's hunters. If you do feel it is just a flesh wound you can sit for the same bear and if you kill it, it will only count as one kill.

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13. How do I get the bear hides home, or can I leave them with your taxidermist?

We take care of all the skinning and we freeze the hide and skull for you to take home with you on your return flight. You can also leave it with our taxidermist but it is expensive to get mounted here and then shipped to you later. It generally takes at least a year or more to get it done too.

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14. What clothes are best, what kind of camo? What temperatures, weather can I expect? Gear list?

The normal temperature on the bear hunts is about 35 to 80 F. It can be hot and dry or cool and rainy. Be prepared for both. Any bow, arrow and broadhead set up will generally work fine. If you do have a choice of arrows and broadheads that you use then I would use the heavier arrows with bigger broadheads. Complete penetration with a big exit hole is very helpful in achieving a quick bear recovery.

Gear, clothing list:

- Quiet rain gear, pants and jacket with a hood
- Leather, waterproof, ankle high boots or rubber boots.
- Light gloves
- Extra sweaters, long underwear
- Binoculars.
- Bow and a dozen arrows.
- Any Camo. Pattern clothing is fine.
- Dayback to take your gear to the stand
- Camera, if digital, extra battery, charger & memory cards. Sorry but we will not email pictures to you.

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Call Mike to book your next Alberta black bear bowhunting adventure

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