



Five Simple Steps to Beating Buck Fever

By Steven Bridges

I think it's safe to say that most of us have had to deal with Buck Fever at one time or another. But as most of us know, it's how you deal with buck fever that will decide whether or not you go home with a deer or not.

Buck Fever is the condition that comes over a Hunter when they have an opportunity to take a deer. The deer may be right beneath their tree stand or 100 yards away. For many hunters, the sight of any legal deer puts them into uncontrollable jerky convulsions. Hitting a deer at any range under these conditions is pure luck.

1. Get out and see deer. For people who never see a deer except during deer season, the sight of a legal deer within range can send them over the edge. Get out and watch deer. Go to a game farm if you must, but get out and see deer. Not only will it help with Buck Fever, but you might also become fa-

miliar with the body characteristics of Bucks and Does.

2. Control your breathing and thoughts. When you see a legal deer, focus on controlling your breathing. Nice deep breaths and slow exhales. Whatever you do, don't hold your breath! Also, don't freak out and start thinking "Oh my God, there's a deer, I better shoot quick before he/she is gone". Concentrate on making the shot. Focus on a spot. Count backwards if you have to in order to get your mind off the deer. Anything that will help you focus on making the shot.

3. Visualize yourself making a successful shot. I often sit in my stand and visualize myself making a successful shot on a deer. Even when I'm not in the stand, I'm thinking about making a good shot on a deer. See yourself remaining calm, cool and collected. Visualize yourself easing your weapon up and getting a good sight picture and

focusing on a small area. Visualization can be very important in controlling Buck Fever.

4. Practice, Practice and then Practice more. It was three years of bow-hunting before I took my first deer with archery equipment. The previous two years I had many opportunities, but failed for many reasons. On year three, the second weekend of the season I had three does come through the brush near my stand. I'd spent all Summer practicing with my bow. I automatically drew, aimed and shot just like I'd practiced. Practice with your weapon until you know it intimately. Practice builds confidence. Confidence in knowing you can hit what you're aiming at goes a long ways in settling your nerves.

5. Hunt small game. For many Hunters, deer hunting may be the only time when they have an opportunity to shoot anything. Buy a .22 rifle if you don't have one or take your bow and get out in the

woods and hunt small game. Squirrels, rabbits or even varmints. It doesn't matter. The same dynamics that go into putting a deer on the ground are the same that goes into putting small game on the ground. Sight picture, control your breathing, steady aim, squeeze the trigger. When you can consistently take Squirrels at 40 and 50 yards with a .22, you'll be ahead in your deer hunting game. And who knows, you might find that deer hunting hotspot you've been looking for.

I've learned to control my Buck Fever until after the shot. That's when the shakes will hit me hard. My right leg gets short circuited and starts thumping like it has a mind all its own. There's no shame in getting Buck Fever. But you need to work at controlling it until after the shot. Then you can shake so hard that you knock all the leaves off the surrounding trees!



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