

❑ **Gators** —Quite often you will be traveling in wet grass or snow. Staying dry becomes critical. Snug-fitting Goretex gators are best. They come in various sizes, but generally large or extra-large is necessary to fit over hightop hunting boots. Wool and fleece gators are available, but snow and ice cling to them. Nylon gators are the lightest, and if they fit well, they are generally the most quiet. Gators prevent moisture from wicking up your pants. The best on the market are made by Outdoor Research, Inc.

❑ **Suspenders** – A lot of my friends have developed potbellies; if they wear a pair of heavy pants or carry around a pocket full of cartridges or candy bars, the pants start sliding down over their ankles. Not only does this look bad, it makes walking difficult. If you are backpacking, the pack will often push your trousers down as well. Every hunter should have a good pair of suspenders. Not only will they improve your stride, they will make you look less cumbersome to any animals that happen to be watching. The best suspender set-up is generally the button-on model that attaches to the front and back of your pants, but the claw-snap is fine.

❑ **Gloves** – You will need two pairs. One pair of light finger gloves; Goretex or wool are fine. One pair of mittens, preferably with leather exteriors, with a good fleece or wool liner. Quite often hunters will be using a fire for heat or cooking at night. A leather mitten makes a handy potholder and won't burn as easily as fleece or cotton. Make sure you don't burn your gloves up around the fire while drying them. Maybe you should bring an extra set of finger gloves to replace the ones you will probably lose.

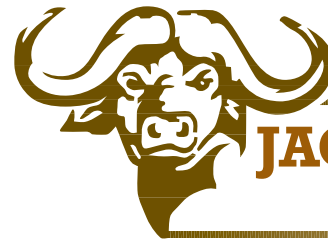
❑ **Camera** – A lightweight digital camera with flash and extra batteries.



❑ **Coveralls** – Insulated coveralls are a good idea on all late season hunts. If you are riding horses, you will find the back of a horse to be one of the coldest places on earth. The same goes for a hunt from a stand for deer or elk. It can be cold! When you are inactive, sitting on a stand or riding a horse, put on a set of insulated coveralls, one that you can remove easily so you can shed the coveralls to pursue game in less cumbersome clothing.



❑ **Spotting Scope** – A lightweight 20 power scope is usually plenty to determine the size of a bull or buck. Heavyweight, high-powered spotting scopes are usually not that essential when hunting game with body size and large antlers that are more easily seen, unlike antelope and goat. A good, extendable tripod is also a great help if you spend a fair amount of time looking through a spotting scope. If you are hunting from a vehicle, be sure to get a window mount for the scope. When transporting your optics to and from the hunting area, it is a smart to have a handbag with a foam rubber bottom to carry fragiles. **GOOD OPTICS ARE AS IMPORTANT, OR MORE IMPORTANT, THAN YOUR RIFLE!**



**JACK ATCHESON
& SONS, INC.**

Hunting Consultants ♦ Butte, Montana

ELK HUNTING GEAR LIST



Jack Atcheson Sr.



Keith Atcheson



Jack Atcheson Jr.

Our gear suggestions include the following:

☒ **Rain Jacket & Pants** -- Nylon coated with rubber on the outside of the garment is quiet and lightweight, but it does not breathe. A Goretex jacket and pants will work, but are noisy. If you are stalking an elk or deer at close proximity, remove the rain gear. Wear wool or fleece. You may still get wet, but you will notice it less. A good trophy is worth it anyway!

☒ **Shirts** —Three lightweight shirts with long sleeves. Wool is generally best.

☒ **Jacket**—Midweight wool or fleece in September through mid-October. Go with heavyweight wool or fleece in November and December. The layer system is applicable during any period.

☒ **Vest** – A good down or synthetic fill vest with a collar is a small item that can save your day.

☒ **Underwear** – The best underwear is a synthetic fiber. Lightweight is generally adequate on these hunts, except in late November or December. Then take the heavyweight longhandles. We suggest a zip-down turtleneck so you can control the warmth of the garment and provide better venting. It is a great idea to take two pairs of long underwear. Store one pair inside your sleeping bag that you can use at night instead of pajamas. If you sleep warm, you will be in good shape to hunt the next day.



☒ **Hats** -- Mountainous hunting usually requires vigorous walking, so a lightweight baseball cap is usually fine as far as keeping the sun out of your eyes and offering some protection from weather while not being so warm it leaves you sweating.

☒ **Socks** – Three pairs of heavy socks and three pairs of lightweight socks, preferably designed for anti-blistering. The socks can be washed and dried daily.

☒ **Pants** – If you are hunting during September and early October, generally the weather can be quite warm, so lighter weight wool or fleece is a good choice. Elk have incredibly keen hearing and quiet clothing is a must. If you are hunting late October through November, you can usually expect downright wintry conditions.

Heavy wool pants or wool bibs are a good choice on these hunts. Take two pairs.



☒ **Daypack** – Your daypack should have approximately 2,000 square inches of capacity. Roughly enough to stuff your coat, lunch, and survival kit into. A few extra pockets on the outside are handy for flashlights, extra batteries, maps, etc. The best packs are the top-load models, without zippers on the sides. Zippers often break, making the pack useless. Nylon is the toughest and lightest, although some fleece models work well also. Fleece tends to pick up burrs and brush. Pick what is right for your area. Throw in some tinfoil. A campfire often accompanies the midday break. A toasted sandwich always tastes better than a frozen sandwich.



☒ **Sleeping Bags** – Because of the varied, often unexpected, conditions a hunter can experience while hunting mountainous terrain, it is often better to take two lightweight sleeping bags. I prefer synthetic bags, such as *Hollofil*, etc. Place one bag inside the other. The inside bag should be the mummy type, a more compact model. The outside bag can be a rectangular one that offers a little more room. Since you have two bags, you can leave the outside bag open if you encounter warmer weather. Should it get cold, zip both bags up and you can brave subzero temperatures. Since sleeping bags are bulky, hunters should obtain a compression stuff sack to help bind the bags into a smaller parcel for easier transportation. Keep a set of down underwear in your sleeping bag if you are a cold sleeper. If you are hunting from a lodge, you may not need a sleeping bag. Ask your outfitter!

☒ **Canteen** – In drier weather, it is important to have about two quarts of water with you. In cooler weather, one quart will do. Wide mouths are best as they are easier to fill from streams.

☒ **Backpack (Overnight Trips)** – If you are on a backpack hunt, your backpack is a very important part of your trip. Don't buy just any pack and expect it to work perfectly for you. Packs need to be fitted to your shape. A pack capable of carrying 5,000 to 6,000 cubic inches is necessary for extended trips. Since hunters are often off the beaten path with no trails, and will encounter brushy conditions to reach their hunting areas, an internal frame pack is generally the best choice. Internal frame packs will comfortably carry 50 to 80 pounds, which is about as much as any sane hunter should consider carrying. Internal frame packs have a better center of gravity and do not stand far above the hunter's head, catching brush, knocking snow down your neck, etc. It is not particularly easy to carry a rifle with any backpack. Hunters should devise some type of system to hang their gun on their shoulder strap so that the gun sling will rest there without sliding off the nylon strap. The set up should also be lightweight and make it easy to put the gun into action.

☒ **Boots** – Due to the varied weather conditions you can encounter on elk hunts, hunters should probably take two pairs of boots. If you are hunting September through October, weather is generally warmer and drier. If it does snow, it often melts off in a few days. A leather boot with a good lug sole and a pair of insulated rubber boot packs are an excellent choice. The leather boots really don't need to have a heavy insulation. Be sure to take extra liners for the boot packs, as wet liners lose a great deal of their insulating qualities. Rotate the liners each night so you have a dry pair at all times. On late October and November hunts, weather conditions are usually quite cool and, in late November, sometimes below zero. Heavily insulated boot packs are a definite must at this point. Be sure to take extra liners.



☒ **Orange Vests** – Many states require a safety orange vest while hunting big game. Some states require safety orange hats as well. Animals don't see safety orange like humans do. I have had deer walk within ten feet of me if I remained motionless, yet I had a 400-square inch vest on. So don't worry about the game seeing you. **Be safe and wear the orange vest!**