

**Sleeping Pad** – The best on the market is the Thermarest pad. A ¾-inch pad is ample and a lot more compact for transportation by backpack or horseback. If space permits, a full-length pad, two inches thick, goes well under old bones. Outfitters often supply pads.

**Sleeping Bag** – Because of the varied conditions hunters can experience in 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 style, a more compact model. The outside bag can be a rectangular one that offers a little more room. Because 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. Sleeping bags are bulky, so hunters should obtain a compression stuff sack that helps bind the bags into a smaller parcel for easier transportation.

▣ **Rifle Scopes** – Much is written about rifle scopes and what power is best, types of crosshairs, light gathering qualities, etc. Like anything, it is best to keep it simple. In North America, it is illegal to shoot earlier than a half hour before sunrise or a half hour after sunset. So light gathering quality is not quite as important. A good waterproof scope is very important. Ask your outfitter. There are exceptions. Scopes are always out in the weather, in rain and snow, in and out of hot pickups, and fogging is always a problem. Buy a quality scope. Variable scopes can really help, especially for shots over 150 yards. They give a hunter a clearer picture of his target. However, often I have seen hunters cranking their scope up to high power and forgetting to turn it down. Their next encounter with a big game animal might be at 20 yards, and nine power at 20 yards is definitely going to be good for the animal-- you won't see it! A good all-around scope is a four power. Most hunters should not shoot over 200 to 250 yards at any animal. On Alaskan bear hunts, most guides will not allow the hunter to shoot over 100 yards at a bear. The likelihood of a poor shot increases dramatically over 100 yards. Scope covers are a must. The best covers are clear so you can use the gun if you instantaneous use. Covers that can be quickly removed are also a must. Game animals really don't care how much you want them or how much you have spent to hunt them. They are not going to stand around while you fumble to remove a scope cover or clean your scope. **Be prepared!**

▣ **Range Finder** – Many hunters have not had the opportunity to shoot at game over 100 yards. A great many shots are missed because the distance was miscalculated. Most game animals are much closer than we realize. Always hold on hair the first shot or carry a range finder, which can give you a pretty good calculation of your yardage. A good rule of thumb is, if you have to aim high over the animal, he is too far to shoot anyway.



# Deer & Antelope Hunting



## Gear List

**Rain Jacket & Pants** – Antelope and deer hunting is usually not overly vigorous, so a rubberized nylon or Goretex rain pants and jacket would be fine.

**Daypack** – A good daypack will 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 any 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. Choose what is right for your area.

**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!

**Shirts** – Two lightweight shirts with long sleeves.

**Pants** – In September and early October, jeans are fine. In mid-October to early November, a lightweight wool or fleece pant is ideal. Try to find pants with extra pockets in the legs (cargo pockets). You never have enough pockets for handkerchiefs, flashlights, etc.



**Jacket** – Midweight wool or fleece is generally best, even better when the Windstopper technology is applied.

**Vest** – A good down or synthetic fill vest with a collar.

**Underwear**—September and October deer and antelope hunting can be hot, but from mid-October onward, blizzards can occur. The best underwear is a synthetic fiber. Lightweight is generally adequate on these hunts. 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 so that you can use them as pajamas. If you sleep warm, you will be in good shape to hunt the next day.

**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.

**Leather Gloves** – Generally speaking, the last 50 to 100 yards of a stalk on any antelope is going to be on your hands and knees or your belly. Due to the nature of the ground, which is usually desert-like and full of cactus, you have to watch your hands and knees. It is wise to wear leather gloves to protect your hands. Knee and elbow pads are also a good bet, as we have crawled for several hundred yards to get a good shot at a particularly large buck. If you don't take the hand, knee and elbow protection, be sure to take an industrial set of tweezers! Lots of Cactus!

**Hat** – A baseball cap or cowboy hat is fine. On late October-early November hunts take a cap with earflaps; in can be wintery.

**Canteen** – When hunting in drier weather, it is important to have about two quarts of water with you each day. In cooler weather, one quart will do for most people. A wide-mouth canteen is generally best, as they are easier to fill from streams.

**Boots** – A lightweight pair of boots are generally fine on deer and antelope hunts. However, cactus can often be a problem. Fabric-sided boots may stop cold and moisture, but they don't slow a cactus spine down a bit. An all-leather boot is a better choice. Heavy lug soles are not necessary on antelope hunts, as antelope are usually found in flatter terrain. Insulated, rubber-bottom packs can keep your feet warm if it rains or snows.

**Bipod** – A bipod is an essential part of hunting deer and antelope. Bipods can be mounted on the front of your rifle and are required equipment on any pronghorn antelope hunt. Most antelope run in herds of 20 to 100 animals and it is usually unlikely that you will be able to crawl much closer than 150 to 175 yards without being detected. You are usually shooting from your belly from a high piece of ground above the antelope. Hunters should barely show the top of their head to escape detection. The bipod gives the hunter a solid rest for a shot at this range and also lifts the barrel of the gun out of the grass high enough to avoid bullet deflection. An adjustable bipod that elevates the gun from 8 to 16 inches is ample. Practice shooting off your belly before going afield so that you are comfortable with this position. Antelope are very spooky!

▪ **Spotting Scope** – A quality, high-powered spotting scope is very important for sheep, goat, deer and antelope hunting. Generally, hunters are looking for just a few inches of horn and sometimes at great distances. A 20-power scope just won't give you the view at a mile and a half to give you an idea of size. You might have to spend a half day walking in one direction just to find that it wasn't as big as you had hoped, taking time from your hunt. A good extendable tripod is also a great help if you spend a fair amount of time looking through a spotting scope. When you transport your optics to and from the hunting area, it is smart to have a handbag with a foam rubber bottom to carry fragiles.