



Plan your spring hunt for all possibilities

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PLANNING FOR a hunt entails more than just grabbing your rifle, ammo and camping kit. Careful thought needs to go into all three of these and then some. Planning is best written down, not only for your own reference, but so you can provide details to a person you trust, who can raise the alarm should you not turn on time with that tasty bit of wild meat you promised!

Planning and preparation for any outdoor activity is important. But when that activity involves a firearm, lots of physical exertion

and takes place off the beaten track, then you owe it not only to yourself but to your family and friends to plan and prepare well.

There is something special about the spring air that draws us out into the bush and tops. That freshness, the warmth in the sun and watching the game animals bathe in it is all part of the experience. However, what we need to remember is how changeable spring conditions can be. The weather can deteriorate quickly, a cold snap can appear from out of nowhere and

showers are almost inevitable. In preparing for your spring hunt you will need to factor all of these possibilities into your plans. Make sure you wear and pack appropriate clothing and take extra gas canisters and food in case you get caught out. Be prepared to spend an unplanned night under the stars or in the rain if need be. If we choose to go into this ever-changing environment then we need to respect it and be prepared for what it can throw at us.

Consider your skills, know your limits and plan your hunt based on what you feel confident you can handle. Think about your fitness, your capabilities, how far you are going to travel and the area you plan to hunt in. Are your navigation skills up to scratch? Are you able to use a map and compass as well as your GPS? Consider signing up for a navigation, bush skills or first aid course before you head too far into the hills. While you may see some weaknesses when you first assess yourself, you will also find your strengths and that will help your determine a plan that best suits your trip. Your next trip plan and the one after that will no doubt include new skills you learn along the way.

If you are hunting with others then be honest about your capabilities. Expect the same from your hunting partners. If you are on medication or have a medical condition, let them know. The great outdoors deserves respect, but so do those that share it with you. Don't put others in a situation where they are not fully informed or are put at risk due to lack of information.

Before you head out check the weather forecast at metservice.com for the area you are hunting. It's a good idea to see what the weather was doing before you get there and also the time after you expect to have left, just in case. Would you expect rivers in the area to be high? Is there a need for you to cross a river? Plan your route with this in mind. Once you have made your plan, which includes where you are going and how long you are going for, give those outdoors intentions to someone you trust. Use the free tools on the adventuresmart.com website to help you.

A basic first aid kit should be carried and include an emergency blanket too. But one of the more essential items is some form of emergency communication device. A cell

OUTDOOR SAFETY CODE

If you're venturing into the outdoors this spring, the Mountain Safety Council advises every hunter to follow New Zealand's Outdoor Safety Code:

- 1. Plan your trip:** Seek local knowledge and plan the route you will take and the amount of time you can reasonably expect it to take.
- 2. Tell someone:** Tell someone your plans and leave a date and time for when to raise the alarm if you haven't returned.
- 3. Be aware of the weather:** New Zealand's weather can be highly unpredictable. Check the forecast and expect weather changes.
- 4. Know your limits:** Challenge yourself within your physical limits and experience. Going with others is better than going alone
- 5. Take sufficient supplies:** Make sure you have enough food, clothing, equipment and emergency rations for the worst case scenario. Take an appropriate means of emergency communication like a personal locator beacon.

More information on outdoor safety can be found on the Mountain Safety Council's website www.mountainsafety.org.nz

phone is not enough as coverage can be non-existent. The Mountain Safety Council recommends that all hunters carry a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Mountain Radio with them. Keep the PLB on your person as sometimes you can become separated from your pack. Also remember you may find yourself in a situation where you are unable to activate your device, so again leaving your outdoors intentions with a reliable person really is your best insurance policy.

Anyone, including experienced hunters, can encounter problems in the outdoors. But how a person prepares themselves and their kit will assist them in making the right decisions. Know your limitations but have confidence in your own skills and abilities. If you have planned carefully and have a backup plan for if things go wrong, you will have an enjoyable, safe and memorable hunting trip. ☺