

HONOR AND RESPECT

We are a community of multitudes and generations. Our way of life predates recorded history. Our roots go back to a time when there was no thought of justifying or defending the right to hunt. Hunting was done for one simple reason, survival. There was no one who did not understand the value of the hunt and no one to question the reason or consider the merit. There was honor and respect in taking wild game to feed one's family.

In modern day society, our hunting community is based on a culture of honor and respect derived from our ancestors' dependence on the hunt and the quarry. We are defined by our skills as hunters, our love for the wild animals we pursue, and our concern for the wild places in which the animals thrive. As hunters we are vigilant, prepared, and capable when there is a threat to our community, the animals, or their environment. Our intentions are true and pure as they relate to our pursuits, and the non-hunting public is tolerant, if not supportive, as long as we stay true to our core principles and ethics. Our ethics are not established nor limited by the minimum standards of the law. In fact, "legal" is often way less than ethical.

With that said, there is a war raging and the public's

perception (and therefore the acceptance or tolerance of us as a community), is potentially at stake. What is astounding is that multitudes and generations of us are being outmaneuvered by the Frankendeer faction. The "antler inches at all cost" addicts and their suppliers are so driven by ego and money that they will go to any lengths to legitimize their pseudo-hunts, including a very effective and well-funded lobby. At the very heart of their effort is a desperate need to make the public view them as a part of us, so as to trade on the goodwill we have worked for generations to establish and maintain.

They are very good at the political game. It all begins with their propaganda, which suggests that we are starting a fight among hunters when we reject their redefinition of the hunt. It is bizarre that this underwhelming minority has such potential to negatively affect so many of us and that their position is that "we started it!"

One of the hottest battlefields is Texas. There is a well-funded group in Texas that practices "extreme animal husbandry," whereby they produce Frankendeer and sell them into a pseudo-hunt situation, which they sell as a "hunt." It is currently legal to release Frankendeer and kill

it within 10 days of its release. This cuts against so many of the parameters of the fair chase hunt equation it is laughable, but yet it is "legal." And according to their propaganda, we are the bad guys for "pitting hunters against hunters."

Another case of propaganda is that this is a property rights issue. This is the best defense in Texas, as everyone is exceptionally sensitive to our right to do what we want with our land. In this case, it is a red herring. We would no more advocate any diminution of a landowner's rights than we would advocate against our rights as hunters.

The simple truth here is that we want to expose and thereby devalue the Frankendeer product and the pseudo-hunt scenario. We want to highlight the distinction between "legal" and "ethical" as defining standards of the hunt. We want to help the public see the tremendous difference between the egregious pursuits of antler inches at all cost versus simple, justifiable fair chase hunting.

Fortunately, we have a remarkable advantage in this situation. There are multitudes and generations of us. All we really need to do is stand up and be counted. ■



THE ETHICS OF FAIR CHASE



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Interestingly, now that the put and take, Frankendeer, pseudo-hunt has been available for a while, operators are seeing a drop off in buyers. Could it be that once you have shot a 400-inch, two and a half year old there is no place left to go? Perhaps its because shopping and shooting is not hunting, and the experience wasn't all that memorable? Maybe there's a shortage of capes for mounting without holes for ear tags?