

**My hunting partner went** on a brown bear hunt on the Kamchatka Peninsula this spring. We had the opportunity to visit in detail about the hunt a couple of weeks ago while we were exploring a new potential elk hunting area on the Middle Fork of Idaho's Salmon River. Since I have made a number of brown bear hunts in Alaska and have other friends who have hunted a variety of game in Russia, I found the discussion quite interesting.

We talked about all aspects of the hunt, beginning with the potato soup and vodka and concluding with the way in which cultural differences impacted the hunt. My friend did not shoot a bear, although he saw a number of bears that he could have taken. The most interesting aspects of the hunt had to do with the cultural differences and the extent to which techniques many of us would call "unfair" were either used or available for use in the hunt.

Russian helicopters were used to ferry the hunters to camp. Once in camp the guides and hunters used Russian snowmobiles for hunting. In this instance, the guide drove the snowmobile and the hunter rode in the sled. The Russian snowmobiles in no way resemble the Skidoo High Mark models we ride out here in the West. Once the guides pushed them up the hill to where the snow began they did work well enough that they were better than walking. They were also fast enough to chase down a brown bear. My friend chose to hunt on foot using the snowshoes he had brought for the hunt. Since there was a lot of deep snow, hunting on foot turned out to be a significant physical challenge, especially for the guide who wore what we would call "irrigation boots." In other words, knee high rubber boots.

A typical day involved either walking from camp or using a snowmobile and sled to get to the hunting area. From there, it was on snowshoes for my friend and on foot for his guide. After several days of this type of hunting my friend's guide suggested using the snowmobile to pursue a bear.

When my friend declined, the guide suggested that he chase the bear on the snowmobile and shoot the bear in the leg to slow it down a bit. Again my friend declined. In fact, shooting a bear out of the helicopter was an option on this hunt. Whatever it took to get the bear was the bottom line. When my friend chose to continue hunting on foot, the guide became upset. In the end, my friend prevailed and hunted on foot during the entire hunt.

Without going into all of the other details, I cite the hunting techniques available on this hunt to make a point: the fair chase rules which we as a Club have promulgated are not universally accepted in the hunting world. Even in our own country, there are differing opinions about what is and is not fair as we have seen in our discussions surrounding the Club's fair chase statement and entry criteria for the records program.

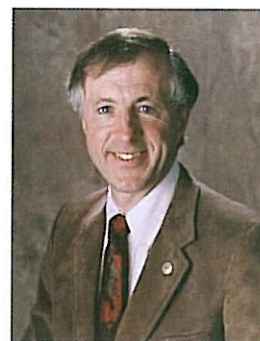
Scott Palmer's letter (below) makes a good point when it comes to balance on the high fence issue. From the letters we received, one might conclude that one could never hunt ethically behind a high fence. But the facts of this matter are that ethical hunters can hunt ethically wherever they choose to hunt, even behind a high fence. Unethical hunters can hunt unethically wherever they chose to hunt, fence or no fence.

There are many "high fenced" ranches in Texas, for example, where one can hunt big game ethically and meet all of the Club's fair chase standards. The fence has nothing to do with the ethics of the hunt because the area is large enough and the cover sufficient enough that the deer have every bit as much of an opportunity to evade the

hunter as they would if there were no fence. The issue of accepting or not accepting trophies taken from within enclosures for the records program arises from the fact that there is no way to consistently and fairly determine the extent to which the fence influenced the hunt. Other factors such as supplemental feeding, trophy management programs, and the like add to the complexity of the issue.

Because of the difficulty in establishing a protocol which will address all of the issues involved in a fenced situation, all trophies taken from behind escape proof enclosures are excluded from the records program. Exclusion of these trophies from the Club's records program does not necessarily mean that the trophy was not taken ethically.

We printed the letters we received on the subject. We did not receive any letters in support of "high fences." The Club welcomes all points of view on this subject. ▲▲▲



**George A. Bettas**  
First Vice-President of  
Administration  
Boone and Crockett Club

After reading the Summer 2000 letters I am left wondering if any member ever poses a viewpoint contrary to the standard of ethics set in place by the club and has his or her letter printed. Are we members to believe that we all have the same feelings regarding high-fences or deer-proof fences? If this is true then there is no need to publish five letters stating so. Do we not have any questions about this issue such as what is "deer-proof" exactly? Ten feet high, eight feet, or seven feet? Do we think deer can't jump this high? Hog wire top to bottom with it extending two feet below ground? Concrete reinforced and electrified? Or how about one with a repair crew working day and night, year in and year out through rain, sleet, or snow? Not one opposing viewpoint published. Not one questioning of the status quo does not give a sense of "fairness" to this section of *Fair Chase*.

After reading the letters I wonder, is there no one to ask if the respondents have ever hunted behind a high fence as Dr. George Bettas admits not to have? One even boldly says that "the deer killed behind this fence bears no resemblance to the trophy deer killed in the wild." That is just absurd. It would be quite humorous to see this tested in the taxidermist's drying room. Do the members think themselves to be such superior hunters that they would be "shooting fish in a barrel" in a 9,000 acre high-fenced ranch? Why would any of us hunt if we were assured success, as it is the challenge of matching skill versus instinct that we must overcome? I have always been taught that any deer taken by legal means is a trophy. Who among us would tell a young hunter that their first buck is not a trophy because it was a "management" buck taken behind a high-fence? The ethical standards of the Boone and Crockett Club will not change so why does this seem to be the biggest issue facing members? I understand that "fair chase" is a noble pursuit and respect its tenets, but let it not be a standard for others to be judged by unfairly and without presenting opposing viewpoints. Let us be guarded about the message we send so we can keep the freedom to pursue game with one of the first management tools outlined by Aldo Leopold, the bullet. We are wasting our time and efforts arguing about such things.

Thank you for your time. Scott Palmer