

CAN IT MAKE YOU A MORE ETHICAL HUNTER?

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Maybe it's just me, but I don't think so. It appears that some product manufacturers these days are concerned about the ethics associated with the use of their products. On the surface this would appear to be a good thing; a conscientious effort to be offering the right things for sportsmen to use for the good of the user and hunting. This is true for most, but the rub for me is the marketing claims by some manufacturers and the reasons behind them.

Some make the claim that using their product will make you a more ethical hunter. I had no idea a product could do that—change our attitude and approach—like ethics on tap! Who knew? I've always believed an ethical approach came from within, from our teachings, experiences, and what we get or hope to get out of hunting. This would be like saying you won't be choosing your next deer rifle, it will choose you. That's a lot of power to give to a thing.

Then there are the products that walk the line of ethical to begin with, and the marketers know it going in, so they add the spin. This is most prevalent today in the extreme long-range shooting category. To make things a bit more acceptable, the claims can look like this: "for more assured, humane kills," or "take the guesswork out of your next shot." A recent granddaddy example comes from a night-vision optics company that chose this as their marketing tagline; "Redefining Fair Chase." Say what?

On one hand, I guess we, as ethical, fair-chase hunters, should be proud and flattered. Hunting ethics and fair chase are alive and well and must carry some weight, otherwise, marketers would neither be concerned about it nor try and use it to sell their wares. On the other hand, should we have something to say about attempts to trade on the good name of our code of ethics when the No. 1 thing challenging our ethics today is advancements in technology aimed at making hunting more assured and in some cases, easier.

Don't get me wrong, technology can be a good thing. It has brought us many things to make hunting and shooting safer, more reliable—and yes—more assured, quick, and humane kills. But can our ethics be bought, and are they for sale?

Marketers playing the ethics card may just end up being one of those things that should be taken on face value, and on a case-by-case basis. Personal ethics are just that, personal, which means it's up to the individual to decide what works or doesn't work for them and what is or isn't necessarily held up against the type of experience we seek.

I do know one thing. If hunting were a sure thing, it would not be as appealing or memorable. And harder still to call it "hunting." Even some folks I know who have gone down the canned-shoot path have come back with, "Been there, done that, got the t-shirt, not going back." They lost something special from their hunting experience—that no-guarantees nature of hunting that drives us to develop skills, push ourselves, and what "most memorable" rests upon. How many times have you earned it, and win, lose or draw said to yourself, "Now that was a hunt." I don't think we can honestly say we can buy that type of experience even if it says so right on the package. ■

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