

Selling the Whole Deal to a Buck  
By: Todd Amenrud

The big North Dakota buck stood at the edge of a picked corn field about 250 yards away. Even at that distance I could see he was a definite “shooter.” Rather than skirting the field and coming by my stand located just off of the corner of the field, he chose to cut straight across the middle. What to do? I picked up my rattle-bag and cracked it as hard as I could. He stopped and turned his head in my direction. I hit the rattle bag a second time and he came on a steady run right at me! Once he reached 80 yards he slowed to a fast walk and started to swing downwind. To make a long story short, he stood 60 yards downwind of me, hardly moving a muscle for over five minutes. The only things that moved were his ears and his nose waving in the breeze trying to smell the two bucks that he had heard fighting. Then, he turned and slowly disappeared over the ridge.

What makes a situation seem real to you? If you can see it, hear it, smell it, touch it. The more senses we appease, the more that condition will seem real. If us, why not whitetail? By using different techniques a hunter can appeal to a variety of the whitetail's senses at once. On that day I sure wish I would have had some scent out to coax him in the final 60 yards.

Decoying can appeal to their sight, calling can fool their hearing, and scent, or the lack of, can trick their sense of smell. Why not appeal to all three at once. After having success with scent and with calling, I've been experimenting more with decoys. I find that



when using decoys, adding scent, calling, or a combo of both will almost always help, but you have to pay attention to a few details.

First, you have to start with the correct decoy. I believe posture is particularly significant. Some decoys and most 3-D targets are in an alert posture. This typically brings bucks in

alert and edgy. You'll often get them to come to within forty to sixty yards or so, snorting

and stomping the ground at your decoy. Or should I say, at whatever has your decoy so alert.

Sometimes an alert posture will work, in fact, sometimes I want an alert, aggressive posture. For instance, if I'm after an older, more dominant buck then I have had great luck "playing the competition card" using aggressive tactics with great success. When after younger bucks or any deer, success depends on many other factors.

What time of year is it? Are you after a buck, doe, or will any deer do? What age class buck are you after? Best advice here, think about what "that specific" deer wants at that particular time and give them a reason to close the distance. For any deer, any time of year, I feel a feeding, greeting or bedded posture in a decoy is best.

As far as scent goes, you first have to start by eliminating foreign smell. After your decoy is cleaned in Scent Killer Soap, only touch it with gloves and make sure it's stored in a place foreign odors are not going to transfer on to it. If you have to transport your decoy, place it in a garbage bag or something that will seal out foreign odors from permeating it.

When choosing lures and scents, again, think about what that deer wants at that specific time and give it to them. Early season with a doe decoy, I might use plain doe urine. Something to add realism to the scenario. Closer to the rut with a buck decoy, sometimes I'll use a combo of Active Scrape and Mega Tarsal Plus. One gives a full spectrum scrape aroma and the other is a territorial intrusion scent. Trying to creating the illusion my fake buck is moving into his breeding territory. Think about "how" and "why" a buck might interact with your set-up. Try and make it seem as natural as possible.

When dispersing the scent, I prefer to put the scent on a Pro-Wick or a Key-Wick near the decoy rather than putting it right on the decoy. Simply because a week later it smells like last weeks pee. This way I don't have to constantly scrub down my decoy. Keep the decoy clean.





Calling can be the third weapon in your arsenal. Once again, situations differ. It might be adding some soft social grunts early season when using a buck decoy. Or maybe adding an estrus bleat in combination with a doe decoy during the rut. One of my favorite tactics just before and after the peak of the rut, is to set-up a small buck decoy standing over a bedded doe decoy. Then I'll do my best imitation of an intense buck fight. In between rattling sequences I might imitate an estrus bleat. I try and create the illusion that two bucks are fighting over my fake doe in estrus. The smell of some Special Golden Estrus should also aid in pulling off the gag. This worked to bring in a two big bucks in North Dakota for me last season.

Even if you subtract the decoy, the combination of calling or rattling and the use of scent can work great. They hear “deer sounds”, and then circle downwind and smell “deer smells”, it gives them a reason to close the distance.

Some hunters might say "by trying to appeal to *more* senses you're leaving yourself open to making *more* mistakes". Details are important whenever you hunt whitetail. Use common sense; keep human scent out of the picture, and present things as natural as possible. Answer the questions “why” would that specific deer want to interact with your set up. And if he does, “how” he might interact with the image you've presented. Maybe to be social or maybe it's for competition. The more real you can make it seem, the better it will work for you!



Captions for Photos;

#### #1 Two Decoys

When presenting a set-up to the deer, you need to give a specific deer a reason to close the distance. Otherwise, “you are just another guy walking down the street.” Maybe the reason is competition or maybe it’s breeding, think about the sights, sounds and smells that would be present with that scenario and duplicate them.

#### #2 WRC-DII-03

When a buck, especially a “mature” buck, enters a situation he’s not sure of they’ll almost always swing downwind to scent-check the area. Next time be prepared by having some scent set-up. This way when he swings downwind you’ll confirm to his nose that there is indeed another deer in the area.

#### #3 Todd ND 6x5g

Part of the fun of hunting is trying new and different techniques, trying to “make something happen.” Here the author poses with a ND buck that was lured in by calling and scent.

#### #4 Rattling and Calling

What makes a situation seem real to you? If you can see it, hear it, smell it, touch it. The more senses we appease, the more that condition will seem real. If us, why not whitetail? Next time afield combine calling or rattling with scent or with decoys.