

Sighting in

TIME SPENT NOW WILL PAY OFF DURING HUNTING SEASON.

Story & photos by Rod Carpenter for the Blue Mountain Eagle



unters spend a lot of time hoping. We hope we draw a tag, hope the wife lets us go, hope the weather is good and hope we can find a buck that wants to come home with us. However, you should never have to hope your rifle is sighted in when that critical moment arrives.

Sighting in is easy, doesn't take very much time and should be done before each hunting season, even if it was shooting well when you put it away last year. Before you head out to shoot, take some time to look over your rifle. Check the bore to make sure it is clear and nothing has crawled in and set up housekeeping. Then check the action and scope ring screws to make sure they are snug.

Sighting in should take place at 100 yards. Yes, people say you can do it at 25-30 yards, but they are just wrong. Errors are not magnified well enough that close. Any farther than 100 yards and the wind comes into play.

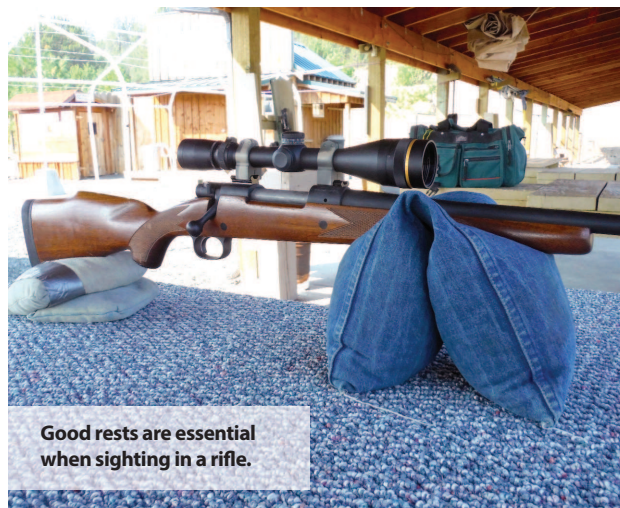
Remember you are trying to figure out how the rifle shoots, not how well you can shoot the rifle, so use a good solid rest. Sandbags, rolled up sleeping bags or pillows work well. You must sight in with the exact same ammunition you intend to hunt with. Any change in make, bullet weight or brand is going to affect the impact of the bullet. In some rifles, not much. In others, the change can be drastic.

Once you are solid, fire three shots. Are they all in the same general area, or are they scattered all over the place? If your shots are scattered, then some diagnosis needs to take place. Are your scope screws properly tightened? Are you jerking the trigger? Do you need a better rest? Once you are sure the bullets are consistently hitting in the same general area, then you can make adjustments as needed to get the impact where you want it. I recommend that you have the bullet hitting 2 inches high at 100 yards. For most modern rifles, that allows you to hold right on the animal to almost 300 yards, without having to aim low for close shots.

There is no magic to adjusting the modern scope. Simply unscrew the caps on the adjustment dials and look at them. The one on top moves impact up and down. The one on the right side moves it left and right. The direction you need to turn is marked as well as how much each adjustment moves impact. A word of caution, the impact may move a little more, or less, with each click. If your bullets are impacting the target about 1 inch left, turn the dial the proper amount to move it 1 inch to the right and shoot to verify the change. Repeat until the impact is where you want it. Then you can hunt knowing at least you don't have to worry about your rifle doing its job when the time comes.

If you need a place to sight in, Bear Creek Shooting Club hosts two sight-in days, Sept. 22 and Oct. 21. The range will be open to the public, and knowledgeable staff will be on hand if you want some help.

Rod Carpenter is an avid sportsman, an anesthesiologist and president of the Bear Creek Shooting Range.



Good rests are essential when sighting in a rifle.



Use the same ammunition you'll use while hunting when sighting in your rifle.



Once you have a good group, it's time to adjust the scope.

SHOOTING RANGES

Enjoy target shooting?
Need a place to safely sight in your rifle?
Enjoy various competitive shooting events?

SENECA SHOOTING RANGE

Formed by the Grant County Shooting Sports Club in 1998, the Seneca Range is located at the south end of Seneca. The facility includes two trap ranges, one skeet range and a 100-yard small arms range.

The skeet range is open mainly on the first Sunday of each month. For more information, call Carroll Walton at 541-820-4624. A small rifle-pistol range is open to the public all the time. Visitors are asked to provide their own targets and clean up.

For more information on shooting activities, contact Seneca Trap Club President Bryan Wolf, 541-792-0222; Vice President Ab Bezona, 541-240-1452; or Secretary Nancy Chase, 541-620-0269.

BEAR CREEK RIFLE RANGE

The shooting sports club also started the Bear Creek Rifle Range, located 0.9 miles north of Highway 26, 10 miles east of John Day, between John Day and Prairie City. This site features a covered, eight-bay firing line and one of the best rifle ranges in the West.

The 1,000-yard range has become popular with many shooting enthusiasts, including black powder fans. Set in a small valley, with targets scattered throughout, the range also accommodates pistol shooters.

Those using the course must have permission and be with a trained safety officer who is a member. There is also a spot at the range for archers to hone their skills.

For more information on Bear Creek Rifle Range, call Rod Carpenter at 509-385-9335. Heading up the black powder group is Jim Sproul, who can be reached at 541-620-0231.

Various shooting events take place throughout the year. The ranges also offer by-permission use of their facilities.