

THE TAG OF A LIFETIME

Laci Wheeler bags bighorn alongside father and husband

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Many try, but few succeed in getting a tag to hunt for bighorn sheep. Laci Wheeler got the rare opportunity at 27 to hunt for an animal that people spend a lifetime trying to get a tag for.

Wheeler has been big game hunting since she turned 12. One of her favorite aspects of hunting has been working with her family.

"Every big animal that I ever killed has been with my dad, and that provides some really special memories for me," Wheeler said.

After taking down animals, Wheeler and her family all pack out the big game together and process the meat together at home.

"It's the relationships and family values that come with it and being able to provide meat for my family, and it makes it a little bit cheaper in the long run," Wheeler said.

The luck of the draw

Luck plays a big part in getting a tag to hunt for a bighorn sheep. Wheeler said it is a lottery drawing each year for people hoping to get the tag.

"You don't have the preference points like you do with your normal deer and elk where you can build those points that can get you closer to getting a tag," Wheeler said.

Her father and grandfather have been putting in for this tag for most of their lives with no success. Wheeler put in for 15 years before she drew the tag.

The day she learned she drew the tag, it felt surreal.

"I was on the phone with my mom after getting the tag, and she was freaking out," Wheeler said. "I was just a little bit scared because it's a lot of pressure because it's a once-in-a-lifetime tag."

Preparing for the hunt

Wheeler began preparing in June for the big hunt at Aldrich Mountain in September.

She had the support of her family as they prepared by going out shooting together and



Contributed photo
Laci Wheeler put in for tags for bighorn sheep for years and made the most of the opportunity when she drew one in 2019, taking the ram out in one shot.

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