

How To Protect Alpacas Regarding Deer Hunter Protection

Parker River Alpaca Farm is nestled into a large State Forest and Wildlife Management Area. This area is open to hunting and some areas, which are distant from our farm, are even stocked daily with pheasant during the small game season. In the months of October through December there is a steady stream of orange hats driving past the farm on their way to the Wildlife Management entrance one half mile down the road.

This is all just part of the rhythm of fall in New England and of little concern until the gun season for deer opens here in December. We take the usual precautions to protect our alpacas. We ring the farm with Safety Zone signs provided free by state so that no one could possibly get close to the farm without knowingly violating the safety zone. I know this will keep out most of the sportsmen but is also likely to draw in some of the once- a- year "get out of the city" amateur shooters. We also put hunter orange neckbands on most of the alpacas, especially all the brown and fawn colored ones.

A couple years ago, as I approached our farm through the woods from my annual Safety Zone sign posting, I peered through the trees to see large doe with its head down, grazing in one of our pastures! Had I been a hunter, I could have taken a clear shot through the trees. As I got closer and it raised its head I only then recognized a lone grazing alpaca with a hunter orange neckband! I thought there must be something else I could do besides stand-armed guard for the duration of the deer shotgun season. What would have stopped a real hunter from getting to that point?

I know from experience that a deer hunter in the woods is intently looking for two things: deer and other hunters. They do want to find deer and do not want to stumble onto another hunter or, worse yet, a game warden or landowner inside a safety zone. Most hunters by law or by common sense wear hunter orange vests and hats. In the forest, hunter orange so intensely contrasts with natural colors that it broadcasts its presence for amazing distances.

So I set out to create "human decoys" to represent another hunter, game warden or landowner. I found a very simple, easy and inexpensive way to do just that. I purchased sheets of hunter orange poster board (from just about any store that has an office or school supply section). The poster board is just about the width of a human torso. Cut off the excess length and then cut the small piece in half to make one hunter orange vest and two hat decoys. Simply nail them to a tree and you have yourself a Deer Hunter Decoy.

Dave Sanderson

Parker River Alpacas

