



End of the Trail: A last ditch effort

Trailing a wounded whitetail can most accurately be described as the "second hunt." A hunter's ability to correctly interpret the signs left behind by game after the shot will directly determine how favorable is the outcome. Fortunately, there are many ways we can educate ourselves that can significantly slant the odds in our favor.

Knowing our equipment, shot placement and taking the time to learn a few basic rules of bloodtrailing will recover most whitetails, but what about those searches that leave us with unanswered questions? Nothing is more disturbing to hunters than to reach what we think is the end of a bloodtrail and find no animal.

It is a long silent walk away that should not be taken until we are completely out of tactics. I would like to share a couple aces in the hole that have worked for me and that you may not have thought of. These should be exhausted before cashing in the final search. The first tool can be used during the day and found as near as your bathroom first aid cabinet.

Simple household hydrogen peroxide and a spray nozzle can be enough to point you in the right direction when a blood

trail appears non-existent. Spray liberally around the area the trail ended to reveal hiding blood specs; they will fizz up bright white in reaction to the peroxide. Blood stands out especially well against red leaves or ground cover that is a dark in color such as this late fall oak leaf bed. This method works as well on dried blood as fresh. So you can go out the next day and get results as well.

For nighttime you can use chemical agents that make blood glow. There are a few products out there but not all work. By far my best experience has been with Blue Star blood-finding agent. When this compound is mixed with water it turns into a virtual bloodhound making blood that actually "glows" florescent blue in the dark.

Forensics experts use this product to uncover blood proteins at crime scenes in places that have been washed clean with bleach of any visible blood. It has now become available to the outdoorsman for big game recovery. While costing more than hydrogen peroxide, it will provide invaluable added assistance in nighttime recovery.

Personally, I throw this in my backpack no matter what I am hunting as it works on any blood and weighs virtually nothing. I always carry a water bottle, so if I haven't drunk that, I use it to mix with the two capsules in the spray bottle, producing the blood-finding agent. If my water is gone, I can use creek,



Forensics experts developed this state-of-the-art recovery agent that is now being used to recover wild game around the world.

river, swamp or lake water to dissolve tablets with the same results. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain by carrying this BlueStar product. Might I add it actually works! I have found this tool invaluable.

Although there is no doubt that whitetails are tougher than a hunter thinks, and many survive what could have been a non-lethal hit, it certainly helps to clear our consciences to know we have done everything short of renting a helicopter to find our deer. Next time you have reached the end of the trail, reach for these last two alternatives. It could help to rewrite what might otherwise be a disappointing end of your next hunting adventure.

Valuable Resources

Tracking Wounded Deer by Richard P. Smith is VERY informative and includes a deer hair chart; it is available for \$19.50 direct from Smith Publications 814 Clark Street, Marquette MI 49855 Web Site www.RichardPSmith.com Phone 906-225-1002

Blue Star's glow in the dark blood finding agent can be purchased on line at www.cabelas.com or at most Cabela's Stores at \$18.99 for two 8 oz. doses. To find a dealer near you go to www.bluestar-hunting.com.

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Blood trailing tools can be as close as the first aid cabinet.