

The Curse of the hunt for coyote#8

This is a long writeup, so grab a morning coffee and enjoy.

December 12th was the night where I had missed this coyote with a shot to its upper neck as it moved to the right and downward just as I squeezed off the shot. Since then, there have been no activity recorded with my trail camera in the week after. I wasn't sure if that coyote had survived the shot or would it return to this spot again.

I went to the farm during the day on Dec.26th to retrieve the footages and I was happy to see that the same coyote had returned on the morning of Dec.25th at 4:42am. It had found the dead calf that the farmer had buried on Dec.20th. It had finally returned 13 days later. Trail camera captured a total of 28 minutes of it being actively feeding on the calf, a rare video captured for such a long period. I guess it was very hungry for being absence from this prime feeding ground. My shot must have not hit it or damaged it too badly for it to return to this location without fear. An interesting behaviour recorded where it used its nose to lift the soil and cover the carcass before it left for the night. It was concealing and protecting its meal from other predators. That was very cool to witness, and it showed how intelligent these creatures are. My recording also showed it returning on Dec.26th at 12:45am. So, I saw the opportunity to do a stake out on the evening of Dec.26.

Dec.26th

Farmer asked me if I was coming by this evening to give it a go and I said yes. He then texted me a picture afterward showing the dead calf tied down with ropes and it was placed at the top of the compose so that I could have a clear view of the target area. What a fantastic setup! My chance of tagging a coyote had improved.

I arrived at the farm at 8:30pm so that I would have enough time to setup my tripod behind the barn window on the 2nd floor looking down at the pit area. I did a couple of test shots to make sure my POI was on for the 17 yards target shot. I was using my FX Impact MK2 shooting the H&N 25gr Gen2 slug at a speed of 967 fps, 52 ft.lb. My slugs hit a spot I aimed at on the concrete barrier perfectly. My night vision camera Pard007S was working well, and I was ready for the hunt. I was very excited and confident that I would get my second chance at this coyote again. Being optimistic in my case didn't pan out well as you would soon find out. I didn't know what time or if the coyote would show up, but I knew they have been in the area between 10pm and 5am. I could only hope they would show up sooner than later.

The evening temperature was mild and only about 6 deg C, but rain and wind came soon after making the wait tougher and tougher to endure. But I was well prepared with layers of warm clothes and long john with insulated pants and boots. I had on a toque with face cover to keep warm.

During the first hour I was preparing my game plan where in the event of a coyote showing up, I would have the following check list:

- 1) Get up from the chair slowly and quietly (if I was sitting down)
- 2) Make my way to my gun which was already mounted on a tripod facing the target
- 3) Slowly click on my external 850nm IR on the side of my Impact
- 4) Turn on the Pard007S which was on standby mode
- 5) Find the target after my eye resume its vision from the blinding light of the unit
- 6) Finger on the trigger (slug already chambered and ready to go)
- 7) Take deep breaths and relax my mind
- 8) Wait for the coyote to stand still with cross hair on its head
- 9) Count one, two before squeezing off the shot
- 10) Follow through with my shot and see the impact on target

Simple and easy steps, right? Not quite as things often didn't turn out as plan especially with long hours of sitting and waiting in the dark cold night for the coyote to show up.

Four hours went by quickly with no signs of any coyotes showing up to the target area. It was both physically and mentally tiring to sit and wait for long period of time. I had to stretch constantly to ease the spasm pain in my lower back. My body was not of a 20, 30 or even 40 years old anymore. I kept my fingers warm inside my pockets by moving them so that I would be ready to shoot. Shaking my legs to keep the lower body moving to stay warm as well. As time went on, I started to lose focus and my mind would play tricks on me, causing me to hallucinate and seeing things that were not there. After repeatedly staring in the dark, especially with a night vision scope, my vision got worst and worst. My right eye would be partially blinded by the bright light of the NV unit. I would also begin to see imaginary objects appeared to be moving.

I periodically scanned down range with my handheld night vision scope, OneLeaf NV100 to survey the field below. Only ducks were coming and going in the field below and in the nearby field. I kept my ears opened for their quacking sounds in distress. They always flew off in a hurry and made lots of noise when something approached them. Coyotes love to hunt them whenever they could. They served as a great alarm warning system.

I was startled by the sounds of two coyotes at around 1am. I quickly turned on my NV100 to scan and locate the sound. I found them about 150-200 yards directly in front of me in the neighboring field. They sounded disturbed and agitated. They weren't calling each other as they were spotted standing together looking at my direction. Not sure if they had seen me or not. I was excited and awaked. Finally, they were in the area, and I was hopeful that they would make their way to the pit. Unfortunately, not this night. They never came around. I eventually packed up my gear at 4:30am. It was a very long night, 9 hours of torture. I was defeated badly and went home empty handed. I didn't know why they didn't come by to the bait. I told myself I need to be more careful and conceal myself better next time.

Dec.28

I woke up at 10:30am after less than 5 hours of sleep. My body was sore, and my back still hurt from the stake out. Still disappointed for not getting the chance of shooting a coyote, I decided

to give it another go later this evening. After pleading with the wife, I got the green light to hunt again in a consecutive night with a condition that I need to quit at 2am. I agreed and sadly, that promise had altered the outcome of my hunt.

I arrived at the farm at 8:45pm and again I checked and confirmed my POI. I setup and began my wait. Somehow, I had a feeling that tonight would be the night, at least that was what I was hoping and wishing for. I wanted to tag my coyote#8 before the end of this year, especially after the missed attempt back on Dec.12th. It was urgent for me to get it after the long evening the night before.

Again, it was quiet and eventless in the first couple of hours. I could hear ducks quacking in the field and I continued to listen to any disturbance from them to signal me. I sat behind the wall the whole night so that I wasn't exposing myself at the window. I wanted to try a different strategy.

At 10:34pm, I heard the coyote howling. I got excited and quickly got behind my gun and monitor the target area 17 yards below. I fixed my eyes at the dead calf still tied down with a couple of ropes. I stood and waited, but nothing came. Darn it, not again with no show.

Minutes ticked by then hours. Still no sign of any movement down below at the pit. My body and mind continued to deteriorate. I had to stretch to release the pain in my lower back by bending down and touching my toes with my hands. This old body of mine was getting a beat down with two nights of torture, waiting for coyote(s) to show up.

I would sit and rest for 2 minutes then get up to peek at the pit using my handheld NV. Each time I looked thru the scope, my vision would be partially blinded by the bright light. This was not pleasant in any mean and I questioned myself whether I was insane and whether this was worth the torment of my body and soul. Then I remembered the adrenaline and excitement each time I got the chance to see a coyote in my scope view and the satisfaction of successfully tagging 7 coyotes since I started my air gun shooting hobby. In addition, I was able to share my experience with other likeminded airgun shooters through my Youtube channel.

Wife texted me at 1:04am asking if I was coming back soon. I replied one more hour. I only have an hour left before I had to quit as promised to the wife. Now I was desperately wishing something to happen before going home disappointed again. Seconds ticked by followed by minutes, I was standing by my gun with my eyes glued to the target like a hawk. My mind began to wonder again, and I started to see things moving around. The calf seemed to be moving around shifting side to side. I checked several times with my NV 100 and nothing was moving except the lifeless body of this calf that had been half eaten by the coyote(s) a couple of nights prior with two of its front feet bound and tied to the concrete barrier.

15 minutes passed and still nothing. This was not looking good. I began to feel disappointed again and I wondered why I couldn't get the chance to encounter with a coyote as shown in my trail camera footages.

2 am. I decided to pack up my gear and quit. It was not happening, and it wasn't meant to be this night. I took off my Pard007S and removed my Impact off the tripod. I put my gun back into the case and retracted my tripod and fitted it into its own carrying bag. I made sure I had packed up everything. Just before I grabbed my stuff, I thought to myself, just one more scan with my NV100.

I walked towards the window again and I pointed the NV100 at the target area. WTF! A coyote just arrived, and it made its way to the dead calf. OMG I couldn't believe my eyes with what was happening.

I quickly retreated backward without making any sudden movement or noise. I turned off my camera and quietly unzipped my backpack to retrieve my Pard007s scope. I thought about setting up my tripod again, but that would mean I had to unzip the long zipper to get the tripod out. That would make some noise and extra time to extend the legs. There would be a risk to make noise if I bang the whole unit with my Impact mounted on top while I try to carry it towards the window. I elected to just use my Impact and try to shoot free hand. Not an idea method as I suck at free hand shooting, but I didn't have a choice. At least not at that crucial moment where I had to be quick and most importantly being quiet.

I released the four latches on my Impact case as quietly and quickly I could. My heart rate was flying off the chart now with both excitement and panics. My tired mind wasn't helping the situation either. I was running on adrenaline and made quick decision. I mounted the Pard007S onto my bracket on my Element Helix scope. I then proceeded to turn on the IR and the Pard unit with the recording on.

I got up and moved slowly and as stealthfully as possible without making any noise towards the window. Carefully inching step by step forward until I got closer to the window.

2:10:40 am, I pointed my gun downrange and spotted the coyote which was seen chewing and pulling on the carcass.

2:10:59 am, I zoomed in to 6X to get a better view of the coyote. It was hungrily biting and eating the flesh. My arms were shaking, and I was having trouble steadying the cross hair on the coyote's head. I made a quick decision to risk moving a bit more forward and using the side of the wooden frame with the palm of my left hand as a support. I was able to position my hand on the frame and adjusted my aim so I could see the coyote down below. Now the barrel of my gun was sticking out of the window. This was not good as the coyote could see me if it looked up. I had to take the shot as quickly as possible. I didn't remember if I breath or not...

Everything happened so fast, yet it felt like things were moving in slow motion.

2:11:09 am, I had the cross hair on the coyote's head for a mere 2 seconds (I thought it was longer than 3 second when its head was near the body). It was biting then lifting its head to look behind it. I told myself it was go time when it lowered its head to feed again.

2:11:15am, its head came down to the body and I thought it would hold there to chew for 2-3 seconds. Nope. It bit down on the skin and immediately pulling backward and up within 1 second. My finger squeezed off the shot and hit where it was aiming but the coyote had already moved its head up and away. The slug impacted the concrete barrier and startled the coyote. Its instinct was to bail and ran away, which it did. I was shocked and confused, not knowing what had transpired. Everything happened within that one second mark, more like 1/1000 of a second. My initial thought was my left hand had slipped causing me to squeeze off the shot accidentally. But after reviewing the footage in super slow motion that there was no sudden movement of the crosshair, other than the movement from the shot being released. The slug impacted the concrete leaving a splatted mark while the coyote still had the flap of cow hide in its mouth stretching from the carcass.

Yup, I failed yet again. This time was truly unlucky in my part to squeeze off the shot when the coyote was trying to tear up the hide to get to the meaty part. This was the same coyote and it had avoided the death twice now. The shot was executed perfectly but the target had moved yet again.

After the shot I quickly turned and tried to track down the coyote with my scope. I only saw its shadow disappearing into the field to the left. I ran back to my gun case and placed down my gun and grabbed my handheld NV scope. I peeked behind the window and scanned the area, panning left to right. I then saw the coyote standing on top of the corn feed that was covered with white plastic and tires. It was looking at the pit area wondering what had happened. I thought to myself, it didn't just run off and left. There might be a chance that it would come back to feed again, so I quickly got my tripod out and mounted my gun back on. I quietly setup by the window again, ready for another go if the coyote would come back.

I figured I have another two hours before the workers start their chores at 4:30am. Maybe the coyote would be bold enough to return. Unfortunately, this wasn't the night for me to tag my coyote#8. Two hours quickly went by and no sign of the coyotes. I was sick to my stomach and greatly disappointed at myself for missing this opportunity. Lots of what ifs ran through my mind. Only if I had waited a bit longer to give it more time to feed and get comfortable. But I couldn't have anticipated or known that it would pull on the hide at that moment. I was also worried that it would have spotted me standing so close at the window with my barrel sticking out. I knew in my heart that I have made the right choice to shoot as quick as I could, but luck wasn't on my side. This coyote has used up its two lives.

I will continue this hunt in January after my vacation to Maui. Hopefully upon my return, my body and mind will be sharp and ready to outsmart this elusive creature of the night.

PS. Video to follow on Jan.1 if I am able to get it done before I leave on the 31th of this month.

Happy New Year everyone!