

# KEITH SEBELIUS Reservoir News

FRIDAY,  
November 12, 2004  
FISHING — HUNTING  
CAMPING — RECREATION  
The Norton  
Telegram

## CHALLENGE IN THE HUNT

### Muzzleloaders hunt the 'old fashioned' way

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

Keeping the tradition alive is part of the attraction to hunting game with a black powder muzzleloader. Stalking and killing an animal with a gun that is not as accurate as modern weapons is the real challenge.

Mel Rice, a member of the Prairie Powder Packers Muzzleloaders since the group began in 1976, said there are some difficulties inherent with the big guns. First, they are rather cumbersome. They will weigh at least 8 pounds and the hunter has to put the black powder down the barrel, followed by a small "patch" or piece of cloth over the barrel that the ball sets on before it is pushed down the barrel with a ramrod. Next, a percussion cap is placed in the firing chamber. When the hammer is released and hits the cap, it makes a spark that touches off the black powder and fires the ball. The second drawback is the possibility of moisture affecting the powder, although Mr. Rice said this rarely happens. Misfiring of the percussion caps is another drawback that does occasionally happen. When it does, the sound of the "click" of the hammer is often enough to frighten the animal that is

being stalked, and they will escape. Because the range of muzzleloaders is usually only about 100 yards, it is necessary for the hunter to be extremely stealthy.

Mr. Rice said, "Some people spend a lot of time making sure their guns will shoot where they're being pointed." He said they go to the gun range to check the accuracy of their guns. Some use the old fashioned guns with the hammer on the outside of the magazine. Newer in-line shooters use a gun with the hammer enclosed.

The size of the animal being hunted determine the size of the ball and how much powder needs to be used. When shooting squirrels a hunter would use a 36 caliber ball as opposed to at least a 50 caliber ball for deer.

Deer season for muzzleloaders in Kansas was Sept. 11-24 and antelope was Sept. 27-Oct. 24. Pheasant season is the same for black powder shotguns as it is for regular hunters.

The web site for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us) has more information regarding hunting seasons for muzzleloaders.



Chet Gardner, St. Francis, (above) packed his muzzleloader before taking aim at targets set up for a shoot. Mr. Gardner is one of the many black powder enthusiasts who enjoy the challenge of hunting and shooting with the long barreled guns. A black powder shoot is fun for kids of all ages. These two boys (left) practiced their knife and axe throwing skills at the shoot held in Sappa Park, Oberlin, Sept. 25.

— Telegram photos by Carolyn Plotts