

Micro Stands for Coyotes

I like big country. My wife calls my son and I “Desert Rats” and it’s probably appropriate. Don’t get me wrong—I like the forest too but when it comes to coyote hunting, give me an expanse of desert and I’m pretty happy. Big country, big speakers and a big view of in-coming coyotes could keep me content in this game of predator hunting for a long time. But, more and more, I find myself picking out smaller, specific places that harbor the things that hold coyotes—micro stands if you will. These spots may have only one or two stands in them but have what it takes to consistently hold and produce coyotes time after time. These micro stands are often located in the midst of that big country but may also be smaller areas unto themselves that are often overlooked by other callers.

A friend, Carl, and I called one such stand on a recent hunt. I had secured permission to hunt this particular land but the owner’s cows and horses required a shotgun-only approach. Part of the horse herd took an active interest in our camo clad figures as we made our way into the field and we settled into the end of a finger of brush. The caller and motion decoy continued to keep our unwanted visitors around us as we began the stand. Even though this stand had everything it needed to hold coyotes, at 20 minutes nothing but a bald eagle had showed and we got up to gather the gear and leave. Having been surprised by more than one late-approaching coyote in the past, I was looking around as I got up to quit the stand and, sure enough, I spotted a coyote to our right. Our unwanted guests (the horses) now provided cover for us to sneak back to our hide but they also seemed to keep the guest we were inviting (the coyote) from continuing to our stand. The coyote moved our way then stopped and sat down at 150 yards. It would have been an easy shot if we would have had rifles but, unfortunately, we could only watch as it eventually made its’ way back into the brush.

After several more minutes of coaxing, we determined it isn’t going to return and again began to standup. This time it was Carl who whispers that we have two more coyotes further to our right. I then spot another single coming from the same general direction that the first one left. Coyotes everywhere! The single hangs up in about the same place as the first coyote did then after a bit, it takes off at run away from us. A few seconds later two coyotes run across the meadow in the same direction the last one went. I’m thinking, “Darn, they must have winded us.” Less than a minute later a big male busts out of the brush in front of us running for the decoy and Carl rolled him with a face full of Dead Coyote T shot at 30 yards. I was perplexed as to why the coyote would return to the call after getting our wind but Carl, who got to watch the whole show, said the that the coyotes hadn’t gotten our wind--they were chasing the single coyote off! This micro stand had produced somewhere between four and six different coyotes. Not bad.



Coyotes need the same things to survive as any other game animal—food, water and cover. This can be had on a grand scale in the wide open plains and deserts or on a smaller scale in woodlots, CRP fields or meadows. If the food source is there and the water is there, the coyote needs only a reasonable amount of cover to hide from the unending number of trucks with rifles in the racks that travel these areas in the course of work and recreation. The type of land and vegetation will determine whether a given environment will provide enough food and cover to maintain coyotes or not. At times, micro stands won’t hold coyotes themselves but provide a place from which a hunter can pull coyotes from bigger country around them which is either not conducive to good set-ups (See **Calling Coyotes—The Set-up** in the December

2012 issue of LRH) or is inaccessible because of land ownership or hunting laws.

Livestock attract coyotes. Even when they aren't preying on livestock, coyotes will be found in the proximity of the herds. Why? There is always a good source of water regardless of the weather. Coyotes will also find nutrients in the manure of cattle, especially nursing calves. Ruminants also produce specific vitamins in their multi-compartment stomach some of which are passed through the digestive tract to be consumed by the coyote. During calving season, the cow's afterbirth is full of nutrients and sustains many coyotes that never kill a calf. Cattle may also stir up the occasional rabbit or other rodent providing the opportunistic coyote a chance at a meal. Coyotes love to hang out around cows. Find some cows and you may find a micro stand or two.

Another benefit of ranching to the coyote hunter comes from areas of haying activity. Many times hay meadows are cut in somewhat random fashion to avoid higher brushy areas or low sloughs that are too wet to cut. These somewhat random open areas provide places to make micro stands by either giving the hunter a view of the downwind side of the stand or providing shooting lanes in otherwise flat, brushy areas. The combination of brush and grass hold small game, rodents and birds for a coyote smorgasbord. Stack yards found around meadows provide cover to park a vehicle behind and may also provide an elevated shooting platform.

Most of the best areas for micro stands around livestock are located on private property. Make sure you have landowner permission and never take unsafe shots. One bad experience will ruin opportunities for years to come. Using fragile bullets will reduce the chance of ricochets as well. And, be advised that not all cows take kindly to the sounds of a predator tearing up small, defenseless animals. If you can, call from outside the pasture the cows are in. Coyotes can hear a predator call from an amazing distance.

As a predator caller, you don't have to have huge expanses of country to be successful. Creek bottoms, dry lake beds surrounded by brush, a rancher's dead pit, a winter killed game animal and upland bird preserves can all provide opportunities for micro stands. Following protocol for your Approach (See **Calling Coyotes—The Approach** October LRH.) and your Set-up is even more important with micro stands. Hide your vehicle, walk in quietly and follow Titus' Rule..."Make 'em show themselves if they want the downwind." Although often ignored, your egress is also important. Slip back out as quietly as you came even if you were unsuccessful.

The need for a careful approach was hammered home on the very next stand Carl and I made that morning. After pulling into the property we were to call, we hid the Toyota behind a screen of brush and quietly moved a couple hundred yards to our set-up. We left a narrow strip of hay ground on our downwind side and put the caller and decoy ten yards in front of us. As the caller started some Bunny Blues, it was less than 60 seconds before a coyote was bouncing through the brush in our direction. It pays to be quiet on micro stands and it pays to be ready for action as well!

This winter look for the overlooked places. Many times the opportunities are closer to home than the big country you're used to hunting. Go against the flow. "Go big or go home" may work on the football field but the opposite approach might be what you need to put a spark in your predator calling. This winter try a micro stand.

Good luck and good hunting.

God Bless,

Tim Titus

www.no-off-season.com

The source for all your predator and varmint hunting gear!