

## **2024 Success Rates**

### **Lion**

We had 5 hunters and killed 5 big toms in the front range. In the wilderness, we had 5 hunters, killed several coyotes and 2 lions. One hunter saw some wolves at 450 yards but was only comfortable shooting out to 300 yards. We also trapped a wolf and bobcat and several coyotes while we were back there.

### **Sheep**

We had one sheep hunter, and he took a 158 ram that was 7 years old.

### **Cast & Blast**

We had a cast and blast hunter, and he shot a 5-foot sow and lots of grouse.

### **Early Rifle Deer**

We had two early season deer hunters. They shot 170 and 180 bucks.

### **Archery**

The first hunt we had two hunters. They shot a 6-point bull that scored about 270.

The second hunt we had four hunters. Smoke from the nearby forest fires rolled in and they had a hard time. On the last day, we received some rain and snow. One hunter shot a 5 point, and one hunter shot a young buck. No one had trip cancelation insurance. We were able to supply the trip, but conditions were tough.

The third hunt we had one hunter. He shot 4 times (all the arrows he had in his quiver) at a small bull and never touched it. The guide kept an eye on the elk while he searched for some of his arrows, but he never found them. He saw some deer and passed on them. We had two drop campers. They did not kill anything

The last archery hunt, we had two return hunters. One hunter shot a 5-point bull, and the other hunter did not get anything. The hunter who shot the bull has killed 6 bulls with us in the last 7 years. The one who did not get a bull has only killed 1 bull with us in the last 7 years. The guy who did not get a bull had 4 bulls within 40 yards. Like I told him, I would rather pass up a marginal opportunity than take a marginal shot and wound an animal.

We had three drop campers. One shot a doe but did not have a tag. He thought he could use his dad's tag or use a mountain lion tag on a deer. I had no choice but to turn it in. He received a \$400 fine and had to go to court. A bear got into camp while they were hunting and ate some of their food and tore up the tent. When I got there, they had been up all night trying to chase the bear away. They could have probably had more fun.

### **Wilderness Rifle**

The first hunt we had 7 hunters. Four days before the hunt started, one of the hunters passed away. He booked as a 2x1 with his father-in-law who chose not to come. He did not buy trip cancelation insurance and was upset with me for not refunding his money. One

hunter killed a 5x6 opening day and another hunter killed a 280 bull at daylight opening day. A father/son 2x1 shot a 5-point mid-week and another hunter shot a small chocolate colored bear.

The second hunt we had a group of 6 hunters who were friends. They killed a 300" bull, a 5x6 bull and a raghorn bull and missed a raghorn bull. They had a great time, and the guides told me to book them back ASAP.

The third hunt we had three hunters in a group. We did something a little different. The father was 83 and he brought his kids as drop campers. This does not usually work very well but we tried it. The father killed a 6-point bull and a small buck. The kids killed a 4x5 bull. Another hunter killed a 5-point bull, but we got lucky because the hunter was in terrible shape. He was uncomfortable riding a horse and was even less comfortable walking in the mountains. Rather than follow the guide back to the horses, he decided to follow his GPS to a trail that had not been cleared for years. Fortunately, the guide found him within an hour. The hunter made up for it by leaving the smallest tip he could. Pound for pound, he was probably the weakest man I have ever met. In case you were wondering, the guide did not request that I book this hunter back ASAP. Another hunter killed a large 6-point bull on the last day of his hunt, and the last hunter got within 50 yards of a bugling 280-300 bull but could not see the vitals very well because of the thick smoke from the nearby forest fires. He bugled with another bull as well earlier in the hunt. 2025 was full so he booked back for 2026.

The fourth hunt we had a father/son. The smoke was thick from the nearby forest fires all week and at the end of the hunt, they had to ride the stock out rather than fly. They shot a small bear and saw only 4 cows. Even with the tough conditions and low success, they are booked back for 2026.

The fifth/sixth hunt, we had 5 drop campers. The smoke was bad, and they had trouble getting in with the plane. They chose to fly from the other side of the wilderness. They shot four bucks and missed a bull.

The seventh hunt, we had 8 hunters including 3 fathers and 3 young sons. They killed two 5-point bulls, a spike bull and six bucks.

The eighth hunt, we had 8 hunters. We missed two small bulls, almost shot a bull but the hunter did not have a shell in the chamber, killed a 5-point bull, missed a 170+ buck and killed 7 bucks. The one hunter who did not shoot a buck passed on several, in fact, everyone saw multiple bucks each day.

The last hunt we had 9 guided hunters and 4 drop campers. The four drop campers killed 4 bucks including a 185" buck. The guided hunters took 8 bucks and 2 small bulls. The hunter who did not get a buck passed on some small ones. He seemed a little disappointed that he lost a day of hunting getting back from the spike camp.

## **Front range rifle**

The first hunt was the deer hunt. We had 5 hunters. The first two hunters were return clients who had hunted with us twice in the past. They were both pushing the limit on being overweight. I told them the second time they came that if they wanted to come back, they needed to lose weight. One did and shot a nice buck. The other hunter was in terrible shape and did not shoot anything although he saw a couple of good ones. One hunter missed a nice buck on the last day of the hunt. The last two were a father/son. The dad shot a decent buck the first day and the son missed a nice buck.

The next hunt was the first combo rifle hunt. We had 7 hunters and shot 7 bulls and 3 bucks. The first hunter missed two good bucks, a large bull and shot a 5-point bull. The second hunter shot a 6-point bull and small buck. The third hunter missed a good bull, shot a 6-point bull and a small buck. The next hunter shot a 5-point bull opening day and a small four point buck the second day and was done. The next hunter shot a 6-point bull and missed a decent buck. The next hunter shot a 6-point bull opening morning. He was the only hunter who did not shoot at a buck. He saw a few but did not get a shot. The last hunter missed a good buck, a 6-point bull and shot a spike bull. Overall, everyone had fun and there were lots of opportunities.

We had 5 drop campers. They shot a 5-point bull and three small bucks. They saw a large bull but could not get a shot.

The second combination hunt we had 6 hunters. One canceled out. Three were return clients. One of them shot a 6-point bull and 4-point buck, another shot a 5x6 bull and missed a pretty good buck. The last one of the group of three hunters passed a spike the first day and second day and almost shot a spike bull the 5<sup>th</sup> day. He was having some health issues but toughened it out. They left a day early for a family emergency. Another hunter was first time hunter. He shot a 5-point bull the second day and chose to go home early. He was a great guy but not physically prepared. The last hunter was a father as a non-hunter and his son was a hunter. They passed up some small elk early because he wanted a 6-point bull. He shot a 4-point buck, missed a spike bull the 5<sup>th</sup> day even though there was a good bull behind the spike. They stayed until the end but left immediately after the last day of hunting as they had some obligations pop up.

We had three drop campers- a father and two sons. They shot a 4-point buck and saw a 5-point bull, but the dad had his rifle strapped into his pack and could not get it out in time to shoot. One son, who had prior commitments, walked out early and said he could have killed a decent 4-point buck when he was walking out. Everyone said they had fun. There were lots of deer and I don't think they had to get very far from camp.

The last hunt in the front range we had 4 hunters. 1 cancelled out and the other three killed spike elk. They got done early so we went duck hunting for two days.

Mile High just celebrated its 30-year anniversary. I want to thank all our clients for choosing us over the years.

Forest fires started early and stayed late but, overall, the season went very well. We had four cancelations from hunters which was disappointing, but it happens every year. We have debated whether to just raise the price of hunts and purchase trip cancelation

insurance for everyone; but, in the end, we have chosen to keep costs low and give each person the opportunity to either purchase trip cancelation insurance or insure themselves. We were fortunate that the fires did not close our area but some of our neighboring outfitters had to cancel their hunts because the forest service closed areas due to fires.

The number of people moving to our state is growing. The number of private hunters and the demand for our resources is increasing. Since covid, there just seems to be more people recreating and using our public lands. Technology is also increasing. We are seeing more people who call themselves hunters, shoot animals from such far distances that the animals have no chance. The result for the shooter is bragging rights on a YouTube channel or Facebook post. I am torn because instead of printing brochures and sending them in the mail, we also use these platforms to market our business. Range finders, thermal binoculars, e bikes, google earth, e scouting, GPSs etc. are new to the hunting scene but they have made hunters more successful. I do not believe our elk and deer can stand both the increase in pressure and the technology and I'm afraid Idaho is destined to implement controlled hunts soon if changes are not made.

Overall, the quality of our hunters that choose to hunt with us seems to be increasing. I attribute this to better information. I want to thank (almost) everyone for putting in the time to stay physically fit, practicing with your weapons and just being positive, good people. We hope to see you again on the mountain.

Travis Bullock