

Research feedback into failure-to-identify hunting incidents

I have compiled this document for you to summarise my PhD. This document provides only a small part of a 300-page Thesis, which I am happy to provide on request (go to contact us page). Between 2017 and 2019, I conducted three experiments at the Sika Show in Taupo. I also conducted a wide range of interviews, surveys and workshops. Below lists some of the findings I discovered from the research and what I believe this all means. Many thanks to all those that took part and supported me along the way.

SIKA 2017 – Simulator trials (64 participants)

- A hunt with few signs of deer increases the likelihood that you will shoot when the opportunity arises.
- If you are extraverted or sleepy, you are more likely to shoot.
- The perception of time slows down for hunters so when you think you have been looking at a deer for 2 minutes, it is more like 90 seconds.
- Physiological arousal increases in the last few seconds before shooting.

SIKA 2018 – Simulation and computer-based testing (102 participants)

- Hunters recognise a deer quicker by their forequarters (the boiler room) than any other part of the deer's body, including the antlers. Does this mean you are too keen to shoot?
- Many hunters in this experiment felt that they shot too soon.
- In our simulation, 15.6% - nearly one hunter in six – shot an obscured animal without clearly identifying all parts.
- We found no influence of extraversion, conscientious, or sleepiness or any other individual-difference measure applied to shooting performance.

SIKA 2019 – Computer-based testing (200 participants)

- Social media images slowed the hunter's decision to shoot
- Direct peer pressure resulted in you deciding to shoot much quicker.
- Hunters in our baseline simulation had a 29% chance of shooting the wrong animal
- This increased to a 56% chance of shooting the wrong animal under direct peer pressure, and a 51% chance of shooting the wrong animal when needing to react quickly

INCIDENTAL FINDINGS

- Across all of our experiments, we found no evidence of any association between personality and failing to identify.
- We found no evidence of experience affecting your ability to identify your target correctly.
- Hunting is a very complex activity, and no two hunts are the same but every hunt, no matter how well planned, can be upset by the slightest variability on the day (such as change of weather, change of attitude, momentary decisions the hunter makes)
- Our research has shown that all hunters, new or experienced, young or old, male or female, have the capability of failing to identify their target correctly.

Summary and reflections

- **You are NEVER immune to misidentifying your target.** I have spoken to way too many people and seen way too many hunters who feel that they are safe, and there is nothing to determine the sort of person they are. Believing you could never make such a mistake is your most significant risk and undoing.
- **Take your time, take your time, take your time** even if it means that 10-pointer gets away.
- **Be vigilant and be resilient** – here is a personal example to explain what I mean.

“When I catch a flight to another city in New Zealand, occasionally the flight is late. I see the staff, the pilots, and the cabin crew rush around to get customers on board so the plane can leave. Due to my background of work in human error, I know it is situations like this when people make silly mistakes due to stress, and I do get worried especially as I am on that flight. It is not a nice feeling I have, but I listen to the safety demonstrations more intently, read the material closer than ever before and count my rows to the exit. I get ready; I try to be vigilant and hopefully resilient if someone screws up”.

I want you to have this attitude while hunting when things in the bush do not go as well as you hoped or planned. So next time you see minimal sign of deer, the weather turn or you forget your favourite hunting top, think deeply about how this may affect your attitude and judgment and get yourself ever more vigilant for the hunt that will follow.

- **Every time you shoot is the moment you learn if you identified your target correctly or not** – remember, most hunters who have killed someone 100% believed they were shooting a deer and identified all parts. If you believe this is an excuse made by careless people, let us hope you are not the next one to have to say you 100% thought it was a deer. Reflect on the way you hunt and review your necessary hunting skills frequently. Proactively seek continuous improvement.