



Dave Holt's 2023 Africa Bowhunting Report was written by
Dave Holt and compiled by PNL Testers.

Dave has bow hunted for over 65 years and, for the last 30 years, has hunted in Africa for about six months each year. In 2023, he hunted in Africa for 135 consecutive days in addition to his other African hunts. His bowhunting experience with the African game is without comparison. Dave has taken approximately 2,500 plus animals in locations around the world. He has used central column replaceable-blade and mechanical broadheads with success. He has conducted arrow drag research Easton and broadhead penetration tests for New Archery Products. He is the author of Balanced Bowhunting and was the Technical Editor for Bowhunter magazine for many years. "PNL TESTERS"

The below shot and recovery information were gathered from some of the animals I shot during my annual 2023 meat harvest and culling project. The shot and travel distance information is listed in yards. The travel distance is sometimes estimated by pacing and/or sight. The arrow weigh is the average, as is the kinetic energy (KE). As you'll see in the below report, the shooting distances are kept short. In this meat harvesting situation, keeping the wounding to an absolute minimum is required.

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After 65 years of bowhunting and 16 years of 100-plus days-a-year bowhunting from blinds in Africa on the annual project mentioned above, I would like to share a few thoughts that may help improve your animal recovery success. Here is my list with respect to quick kills and short blood trails.

1. Accurate shooting is the number one factor. This core principle is frequently not given its due. Some hunters think fancy equipment or special broadheads will compensate for poor shot placement. This, most often, is not the case. And naturally, some of us shoot more accurately, and some get overly excited. Most importantly, shooting our best, or even our average, is difficult when we are super excited. I won't go into the causes and improvement options here but will advise you to be aware of your reaction to exciting hunting scenarios. Most of all, don't expect shooting miracles anytime - especially when you are nervous. Learn how to let down safely and do so if you are struggling to make a controlled shot. Missing an opportunity is a far better option than wounding an animal.

2. Shot placement is the number two factor and it's closely tied to accurate shooting. We must know where to aim and be able to hit where we aim. A complete knowledge of shot placement is essential. After learning each species' anatomy, we must realize that a small change in body position can substantially shift the precise aiming spot. For example, if an animal, standing broadside, twists to lick itself at mid-body, its vitals will shift, and its head may block the shot. On the opposite side, the vitals will also move, so the aiming spot must be adjusted. A few degrees of body angle may also change the exact aiming spot. Again, these changes become more difficult to notice and process when excited. Broadside and very slightly quartering away shots are the safest and most effective. Once you recover an animal and have enjoyed your success, evaluate the shot placement. See if it's what you expected and if it could have been improved. Evaluate the hit location compared to the blood trail and the travel distance. I learn from every animal I shoot.

3. Equipment. Broadheads are the most important equipment choice and they should be selected with care and common sense. Broadheads should be matched to the animals we intend to hunt and the kinetic energy our bow and arrow combination produces. I prefer two-inch rear deploying, all steel, mechanical broadheads with sufficient KE. Otherwise, I choose 1 1/4 inch (or larger) three-blade replaceable blade broadheads. Our broadheads must be checked for accuracy, sharpness, and point of impact issues. Broadheads with all steel ferrules that weigh at least 125 grains are usually stronger than their lighter-weight counterparts. Arrow weights between 350 and 500 grains are a good choice for most bowhunters and most animals. I use the same arrow for everything from Duiker (25 pounds) to Eland (1800 pounds). My Black Eagle, Deep Impact arrows, weigh about 449 grains with a 125-grain head and about 474 grains with a 150-grain broadheads.

Questions are welcome at: dhafrica@juno.com

SHOT DATA

Impala - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar – Shot distance - 22 - Travel distance - 55 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - good. Note: He fell in sight.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type - 150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 30 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 95 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - poor. Note: It was a hard quartering-away shot, and the entry wound was blocked with stomach material and fat.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type - 150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance 20 - Travel distance - 105 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - excellent.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 30 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type - 150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance 18 - Travel distance 35 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good.

Baboon - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 21 - Travel distance - 35 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent.

Zebra - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type - 150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 260 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: He ran like a rocket until he crashed. The shot placement was broadside and excellent. Fast-running animals make the blood trail less apparent, so it's more difficult to follow them – particularly when the soil is extremely hard.

Duiker - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.6 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 424 - broadhead type - 100 gr. Rage NC – Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 85 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: The shot placement was quartering away.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type - 150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 35 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - fair. Note: He left at a run but stopped, stood for a few minutes, fell, and expired. The shot placement was slightly quartering away.

Zebra - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 85 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: He ran hard. The shot placement was broadside and excellent. Back a little from other species. A center double lung hit.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 17- Travel distance - 45 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: He stumbled in rocks on the hillside and fell before regaining his feet. He ran an additional 20 yards.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance -19 - Travel distance - 90 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - good. He ran hard, so the blood was a little sparse but enough to follow.

Impala - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.6 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 424 - broadhead type - 100 gr. Rage NC - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 25 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: The hit was in the heart.

Zebra - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 70 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: This was an extra-large stallion that ran medium hard. The shot placement was broadside and excellent.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. G-5 striker Magnum 1.5 inch – Shot distance - 18 - Travel distance - 45 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - fair. He stopped with the group for about 10 seconds, then fell.

Impala - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.6 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 424 - broadhead type - 100 gr. Rage NC - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 245 - Pass through - no - Blood trail – good. Note: The hit was at the back of the lungs and in the liver.

Oryx - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 21 - Travel distance - 105 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: He ran hard, as Oryx often does.

Duiker - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 –Travel distance - 95 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: They usually run really hard and are difficult to track when they run hard unless the ground is soft. This one had a broken shoulder, so there was a drag mark.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 448 - broadhead type - 125 gr. G-5 striker Magnum 1.5 inch – Shot distance - 17- Travel distance - 80 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - poor. Note: He fell while running.

Oryx - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance. 20 - Travel distance 215 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - fair. Note: The shot placement was good, but ran hard - a death run. Fast-moving animals reduce the visible blood on the trail.

Oryx - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 65 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: The arrow fell out the offside at two yards.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance - 35 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent. Note: The shot placement was perfect. He ran hard and hit a tree. He was down in a few seconds.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar – Shot distance - 18- Travel distance - 0 - pass through - no - Blood trail – excellent. Note: This bull had rabies. He came in earlier, but Impalas blocked the view and shot. Being really sick, he returned 1 hour 55 minutes later and presented a perfect opportunity.

Zebra - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance -245 - pass through - no - blood trail - good. Note: He ran hard for the first half of the travel distance and then walked until he fell. When he was walking, the blood trail was super easy to follow.

Duiker- Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance -145 - pass through - yes - blood trail - fair. Note: As usual, this one ran hard and was a little difficult to track. The shot placement was 2 inches too far back.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. G-5 striker Magnum 1.5 inch - Shot distance -17- Travel distance - 56 - Pass through - no - blood trail - poor. Note: He fell in sight, and the broadhead made the hide protrude on the offside.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 80 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: This cow had rabies.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance 18 - Travel distance - 35 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - good. Note: This cow also had rabies.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 – Travel distance - 85 - Pass through - no - Blood trail excellent. Note: He fell just as he was going out of sight. The entrance wound was massive.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 19 - Travel distance - 95 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent. Note: The shot placement was good.

Impala - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance -17 - Travel distance - 80 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail excellent.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar – Shot distance - 20 – Travel distance - 25 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent. Note: There was a massive entry wound in the vital triangle.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar – Shot distance - 18 – Travel distance - 35 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent. Note: This kudu was shot at the same blind and the next day as the above kudu. Both were old and losing condition. There was also a large entry wound in the vital triangle.

Eland - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.8 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance -160 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good.

Oryx - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 474 - broadhead type -150 gr. Rage Trypan w/collar - Shot distance - 20 - Travel distance -175 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - poor. Note: The arrow fell out the entry side at 35 yards. The shot placement was good and to the off side. But the blood trail was unusually poor, and the travel distance was longer than normal.

Warthog - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type -125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 18 – Travel distance - 80 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: The quartering away shot placement was good.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance -17 - Travel distance - 165 - Pass through - no - Blood trail - good. Note: The entry wound was large and in the vital triangle, but the travel distance was surprisingly long. He was nervous at the time of the shot. There was a yearling cow in the heard of eight acting strangely, holding out its tail and playing and bumping the others in an unwanted manner. When we found the bull, she was there and didn't want to leave. Even though I got within 30 yards of her several times, the bush was too thick for a shot. This behavior is so unusual, I'm now certain; she was in the early stages of rabies.

Impala - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 18 - Travel distance - 85 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - good.

Kudu - Mathews Phase 4 - KE 62.7 - Black Eagle Deep Impact - arrow weight - 449 - broadhead type - 125 gr. Rage Hypodermic w/collar - Shot distance - 21 - Travel distance - 50 - Pass through - yes - Blood trail - excellent. Note: The shot placement was excellent.

THOUGHTS FOR MY 2024 AFRICAN HUNTS: At age 76, I am dealing with age-related weakness and shoulder issues, so I have had to reduce my draw weight a little each year for the last few years. Now, I might be approaching the lower limits of the necessary KE (about 65-foot pounds) needed for the 2-inch expandable broadheads (with good shot placement) to obtain penetration to the offside of larger animals 100 percent of the time. No definitive evidence has surfaced, but I prefer to be cautious. I'll reevaluate my situation and may shoot three-blade replaceable-blade broadheads for the larger animals next season. I shot a few Eland this year with the G-5 Striker Magnum, a 1 1/2-inch fixed three-blade 125-grain broadhead. The results were excellent, but I don't think that exact head is currently in production. I'm also testing 125-grain Quality Archery Designs Exodus broadheads. They are strong and function well.

Dave Holt

SEE THE PHOTOS BELOW



































