
Hunting Leases - An Income Option

Landowners seeking additional income option for their operation might consider leasing out their land for wildlife activities. The potential income can be considerable. Leases could be for hunting, fishing or birding. Leases can fall into two basic categories. Short-term (for a particular season, deer, turkey, pheasant, quail, trapping), or Long-term (one year or more for one or more species). The type of lease you offer depends upon the type of wildlife you have on your land, how hunting may affect the daily operation of your farm or ranch, and what services you are offering the renter.

Insuring this potential risk is not a problem. Risk should be shared by the landowner, and the hunters. Since the risk exposure is for limited times during the year, the insurers have priced that risk accordingly. You can add such coverage as an endorsement on your basic farm policy, or buy it as separate coverage. The hunter should carry a minimum of one million of coverage. There are many insurers that provide such policies. One tenant of your lease agreement might be that hunters provide proof of such coverage.

One major land management company will register your land for a nominal fee and have bidders from all over the country bid on your land. The website is <http://www.farmers-national.com/> You could also offer your land for lease through local guides' sharing the lease fee. You could place ads in regional papers and lease the land yourself. Some of you have so much family that you have contact with half the state.

The amount of revenue that you can expect will vary with the amount of land you have available, the type of wildlife on your land, when the land is available for hunting, the length of time they can hunt on your land. You can also offer other amenities like cabins, meals, transportation, guide service, etc. Value-added products or services generate more money, and make your land more attractive for hunting. You may or may not want to be involved with extra services. Operations where all you are doing is leasing out the land for hunting can vary from three dollars to seven dollars an acre for a one-year lease. Some landowners charge an additional fee for trophy deer or turkey taken on their land. I would advise a written lease with terms clearly stated and signed before each lease period.

There is one more interesting concept in the area of hunting arrangements. Get the hunter to buy the land for you or with you. A quarter section in Southeast Nebraska with fence rows, a creek, CRP buffer strips, wildlife food plot, tree covered draw, and 110 acres of farmland is affordable to higher income hunters. It could be purchased and leased to the farm operator or could be purchased jointly under a legal arrangement which includes the farm operator. These kind of joint ventures could reduce capital costs of getting land to farm. For the hunter they have a partner to help in developing wildlife potential and proper management of the land.

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