

# The Importance of GOOD CLOTHING



*by Jake Mowry*

As outdoorsmen, we ask a lot of our clothes and our gear. What you wear out in the woods is as important, if not more so, as the gear you're carrying in your pack or the rifle in your hand. Shelter is one of the first priorities of survival and that starts with the clothes on your back. Protection from the elements and regulating your body to stay warm, dry and comfortable is essential to maximizing your time outdoors. The season is short, and we don't get to pick the weather on the days we get to go afield. There are so

many options out there for different layers and clothing that it can be a little overwhelming.

Today, I'm going to discuss some options that work for me and what I think is a good 80% solution for most of us. Sometimes, old school is hard to beat. For weather 50 degrees and below I always wear wool. I live in the northeast and we deal with a lot of snow, rain and cold temperatures for around 6 months of the year, and I have an assortment of different weight wool garments that set me up for success and

keep my body comfortable over varying temperatures and conditions. Wool is an excellent material. It is antimicrobial and stays fresh, clean and dry even if worn for long lengths of time. It also retains the majority of its warming properties when wet. I love to wear wool for hunting as it is extremely quiet, doesn't hold scent and is very hard to get dirty. I can wear the same set of wool clothing for several days at a time on extended duration trips and they stay fresh and comfortable. Wool is also breathable, and I find that



I don't overheat with physical activity, like trudging miles through the bush, like I do in some other garments.

I have light weight wool pants, a wool shirt, vest and wool shirt jacket that I utilize for the earlier season. In the cool mornings, the vest or shirt jacket over the shirt or a long sleeve merino base under the shirt, keeps me warm. Then, I can layer down to the shirt or wool base layer as the day warms up. I stick with the light-weight layers when tracking, hunting or paddling as they keep me cool enough to not sweat during heavy activity. If I'm going to be hunting in a stand or the temperatures are really cold, I'll level up to my heavier weight pants, jacket and thicker wool base layers.

Wool also sheds snow and rain relatively well, but on windy days the chill can penetrate through the wool easily. For these days, I use an LL Bean wool jacket with

a polar fleece liner that blocks the wind. Quality wool clothes are also incredibly durable. I've used the same 3 sets of LL Bean brand wool pants, shirt, and jackets for ten years and they have no sign of wear. The cost of wool is initially somewhat expensive; however, you can find a lot of wool clothes for sale at second hand shops, online, yard sales or on sale in the off season for hefty discounts.

Another good way to get into wool clothes is to look for military surplus items that are a wool blend. A lot of European militaries used various wool layers for their winter gear. Another option for wool is making your own hoodies or jackets out of wool blankets. You can often find wool pants, blankets or shirts at military surplus shops or flea markets for cheap prices. The initial cost you spend for quality wool evens out when it lasts for years and years. Also, I pretty regular-

ly use different soft-shell layers from companies like Kuiu and First Lite. These companies make a variety of clothing options in synthetic, wool and other materials that are great quality.

On really wet or windy days, I'll wear my Kuiu guide jacket or Chugach rain suit instead of my wool. These soft- & hard-shell style clothes are great for wet and cold weather. I wear a lot of these synthetics during early season when it's too warm to get away with the light weight wool clothes. I've acquired a large collection of hunting clothes over the years and almost never pay full price for anything. Pay attention to post season sales, second hand shops, online and be patient. Most of the time you can get factory seconds, discontinued models or returns at factory outlets or flash sales. Another alternative to the expensive brands is finding synthetic clothes made for hiking in earth tones. Wrangler also has an outdoor line of clothing and I have found their soft-shell pants to be a good balance of affordable and quality. Clothing is an important investment for the outdoors. If you're comfortable and have quality clothes, you can outlast other casual hunters and really maximize your time in the woods. You don't need the latest and greatest in hunting clothes, don't forget our ancestors hunted in buckskins or their daily attire. However, there is no denying having clothing purposely engineered for the outdoors can really make the experience more pleasant. *JM*