

Tuning and Fine Tuning your Turkey Box Calls

Before we start a "tip" for all of you callers out there as I learned the hard way one year and destroyed one of my best box calls. Be careful when you rubber band, band, or tape a call shut so it doesn't squeak in the field, not to damage, warp, or break the sides of your box call by creating too much pressure. Remove the banding device when not in use and do not expose your call to excessive water, sunlight, or heat etc. as they're only made of wood and will warp which causes damage to your call.

Buy chalk made by call makers or use carpenters chalk like the kind for chalk lines that applies evenly and consistently to your call surfaces. The kind of chalk you use can affect the range of your notes from high to low just as your call is made to operate in a certain note range or characteristic (young hen vs. raspy hen).

Sanding your call is often necessary as the call will wear on the lid of the call. Never sand the lips of the box call as this can seriously affect your call and even render it useless. Use a scotch brite cleaning pad or sandpaper of 120 grit to lightly sand your call lid surface. You do not want to remove actual wood but roughen the surface to restore it from the use it's been receiving. Again, I will stress not to sand the lips of your box call itself as this may radically change the sound of your call. I will address box call lip maintenance in fine tuning later in this article.

Chalk the call as often as necessary as you should be able to hear the change in the notes after a series of call runs on the box. I often use my box call as a tom locator/enticer when he's with hens and may chalk 2-3 times in an hour when I'm trying to get into position to ambush him. The key is to make him believe a hen is moving along with him and his new girlfriends and has either lost interest in him or is waiting just over the ridge parallel to his location. Another trick is to mimic the boss hen and she sometimes will bring him right into your lap.

Correct chalking of the call lid is not hard as simply turn the call over and open the lid with it lying on your leg and run the chalk back and forth over the wear area to build up a layer of chalk. Chalk the box lips if a single or double sided call by moving the lid out of the way and drawing only once or twice with the grain of the box call. Do not over chalk the box lips as this will affect the sound of your call.

Fine tuning your call by adjusting with the screw located in the lid of your box call. Be careful not to tighten excessively as this can damage, break or crack your call box or worse strip the screw. Start by turning the screw in until snug and try to make clucks or yelps. Back the screw out by 1/2 to full turns until the box starts to make turkey sounds. Adjust out further until out of tune. Now start turning the screw back in by as little as 1/8 to 1/4 of a turn until you have found your sweet spot or desired turkey notes that you like. Mark both your screw and box call alignment with a small scratch or marker.

Finally, if you desire to change the sound of your call or your call suffers from excessive wear you can try to tune your call with this method which takes a lot of patience and time. Take a

small sharp knife or blade and hold it perpendicular to the box call lip and with the grain draw it towards you following the contour of the lip and only remove small shavings at a time. Try the call after each draw until the change is made that you were seeking. Warning, remove too much wood from the lip or changing the contour of the lip will ruin the call. If it's one of your favorite calls you may want to have a professional call maker tune this last step of your call for you. Remember, treat your calls like the prized possessions they are and they will serve you with many years of service and bring that Big Tom on a string right to you. Happy Hunting.

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