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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LONG BOX CALL (boat paddle style box)

Being that you are acquiring a custom boat paddle style box call for turkey hunting you probably already know 1) how to use one and 2) that long boxes are versatile and effective. Nevertheless, I will submit what little I know in hopes there will be something you can use.

USE CHALK.

I include some pieces of white railroad chalk with each call. That or any chalk specifically designed for box calls and which doesn't have added wax will work fine. You might call turkeys fine without chalk, but the box works best with it. Applying some chalk to the lid once every couple of hunting days is sufficient. No need to chalk the sound boards.

KEEP THE CALL DRY.

If the call should get rained on or dumped in the creek, well, it just won't make turkey sounds until you get it thoroughly dried. Since the call has no glue holding it together (except for the inlay, if any) there is no possibility of the call coming unglued if it gets wet. Water may damage the finish if it gets really soaked but the call should work fine once it is dried. I carry my box call in the carrying case under my left arm where it is easily accessed, quiet and protected. If it starts to rain, though, I put the call in a ziplock bag which I carry in my vest just for that purpose. If you use a larger plastic sack you can actually operate the call while it's in the sack. Remember to keep the chalk dry too.

WHAT'S A LONG BOX GOOD FOR?

A lot of hunters think boat paddle box calls are only good for locating. (Dear Lord, please forgive them for they have been misinformed. Amen) Yes, a long box can really crank up the volume and generate gobbles from far off. Probably from farther away than you can hear them. And I have seen times when we couldn't buy a gobbler with slates and diaphragms from birds we knew could hear us well. But when we pulled out the long box they answered up readily. Not only had that, but they often then come in from hundreds of yards away. I can't explain that but I've seen it happen too many times to dismiss it as coincidence.

I assert that a boat paddle call is much more than a locator. The four birds I killed in 2005, and again in 2006, I brought all the way to the gun with my long box call. This call can make all turkey sounds, including difficult ones like kee kee, purr, and gobble. (Actually, only some of my calls have the ability to kee kee. The kee kee is more often used in the fall season.) But the long box can yelp, cluck and cut with the best of them and better than most. Not only does it make all these sounds, but it can do most of them with low volume as well as high volume. The long sound boards give this call the ability to make high, middle and low pitch yelps, much more so than traditional short box calls. And since it has a wide range of pitch, you can sound like several different hens.

So if you are not currently a believer in the effectiveness of the boat paddle (long box) style of box call, well, I predict you soon will be. In the early years of my turkey addiction, I never had any inclination to own or use a long box until I saw one used in the field. But having seen what a boat paddle call can do, I am now a believer. Sure, a long box has a bit more bulk than a slate or diaphragm, and you would want to be careful not to crush it, but its versatility and effectiveness makes it well worth having in your arsenal. Trust me on that until you prove it for yourself.

One more observation I might make is that a long box gives you an edge on enticing birds who have heard a lot of friction calls and diaphragms. Slates and diaphragms make great turkey sounds

and are probably used more than other types of calls by more hunters. I believe hard-hunted turkeys hear a ton of slates and diaphragms. Remember when you heard that other hunter calling in the woods? Likely you could tell by the sound and the calling pattern that it was not a real hen and you could probably even tell what type of calling tool he was using. I contend that the gobblers hear those same differences. And a long box call is one sound they don't hear much of unless the area is frequented by enlightened turkey hunters. So my assertion is that using a long box call, which sounds different from what the birds often hear, and is versatile enough to sound like several hens, and can faithfully reproduce hen talk is going to make you a more successful turkey hunter.

CARRYING CASE I believe a boat paddle call should be used with a carrying case. It is important enough that I include a case with each call as a courtesy to those who invest in my call. I have incorporated design features which make the call more usable in the field. The case performs several functions. It keeps the call quiet, protected from moisture and abuse, and it keeps the call immediately available for use. Lastly, it has a pocket for your chalk. The case is designed to work with the call as a system. May I suggest that you don't just put the unprotected call in a vest pocket. It will be noisier, more unprotected and not as quickly accessible there.

Some commercial cases are made of leather. But my sewing machine will not sew leather so I make the cases out of heavy fabric-backed vinyl. It makes a functional and practical case.



The case has a belt loop and you could wear it on the belt. I would recommend against wearing it there, however. On your hip the call could be subject to crushing forces when you sit, fall or bump into objects. Down there the call is also subject to scratching and wetness from vegetation. And moisture is never good for a box call. I prefer to attach the case to my turkey vest just under the left arm pit area with the handle facing forward and upward. I just use safety pins through the four tabs which are intended for that purpose. See picture. If you prefer not to use the safety pin method you can just trim the tabs off.

The call is always at my finger tips and I may pull it out fifty or more times a day. Since the call requires two hands to operate, it is nice to have a close convenient place to get the call out of your hands quickly after you call.

Keeping the call quiet while it is being carried is very important. I used to carry a rubber band around the handles. A low tech solution, but it kept the squeaks to a minimum. Now I make the cases with enough Berber fabric padding for a snug friction fit to completely quiet the call.

HOW DO I OPERATE THIS CALL?

The one word answer is "gently". Grasp the two handles lightly and just with the fingertips. No death grip required. First, note that the boat paddle style box has no spring to keep the lid in a centered position. The lid is held in place with a single screw and there is a little slop between the screw and the screw hole in the lid. This is intentional. This allows the caller to "cant" the lid slightly one way or another before you make a stroke across the sound board. I tune these calls to get the best sound when you cant (or rotate as shown in the first picture) the lid, before the forward stroke, toward the call rather than away from it. Said another way, a right-hander will hold the box handle in his left hand, left thumb on the left side of the box in the thumb groove or depression. He will gently grasp the lid handle with the thumb and index fingers of the right hand and gently rotate (or cant) the lid right or clockwise and keep the lid in a clockwise position. Then, holding the lid canted, make a gentle stroke across the sound

board. That should produce a yelp that sounds better than if you hadn't canted the lid clockwise. Experiment and you should find that the better sounds come when the lid is canted toward the call.



As you work the call you should feel vibration in both handles. It's subtle but it's there. As you make a series of yelps keep the lid in gentle contact with the sound board on the forward and on the return stroke. The call should make only a soft hiss on the return stroke and make a sweet yelp as you stroke the lid toward the box. In other words, don't lift the lid on the return stroke.

The best way to play the opposite side sound board is to hold the call inverted, i.e. hold the box handle in the left hand, paddle handle in the right hand, and have the screw end of the call pointed toward the ground. A picture is worth a thousand words here.

And your style will probably differ from mine. Find what works for you.

Here is another important tip. Once you are set up on a bird and are calling, get the call out of your hands after each series while you are waiting for the bird to show. It is infinitely more difficult to get that call out of your hands gracefully while you are being watched.

I use my boat paddle calls to bring gobblers all the way to the gun. Why? Because I can. And because I'm trying to prove the point that these calls are that versatile. But even the man himself, Neil Cost, used slates and diaphragms when the bird was close. Will Primos, of Primo's Calls always said to use only clucks and purrs when the bird was coming and within 100 yds. That's good advice and you may want to have a diaphragm and/or slate call handy for those one-handed or no-handed clucks and purrs. I won't hold it against you. You should practice with an experienced caller, or listen to recorded sounds of real hens. Try to copy their tone and cadence.

MAINTENANCE Just keep the call dry and clean and it should give you many years of service. It has been my experience that these calls are very stable with respect to staying in tune. Changes in temperature and atmospheric moisture do not seem to have an adverse effect on the sounds the call makes. Occasionally, a damp morning may cause some "off" sounds until the humidity drops later in the morning. Still, prudence would dictate that you should not get the call wet or leave it in a hot car.

Neil Cost reports that calls tend to stay in tune year after year and that the lid "marries" to the sound board as they wear minutely together. Many calls are handed down from generation to generation. With reasonable care these calls should last a very long time, past your generation.

But what if a call should go out of tune? Rather than try to adjust it yourself, just return it to me and I'll do my best to get it back in shape. Be advised that the adjustment of the screw is critical. A half a turn can make a large change in the sound. Adjust at your own risk. Likewise, any modification of the sound boards or lid with sandpaper or a tool can have unwanted results. Unless you know what you are doing please let me do it.

I now use Minwax clear satin polyurethane for the finish on these calls. It provides great protection from the elements and doesn't affect the sound. If you choose to touch up the finish, do not get any on the under side of the lid nor on the edge of the soundboard that the lid touches.

Good hunting,

Dan in Spokane