

Moscow, and the next day to Mineral'nyye Vody, to hunt Kuban (Western) tur in the Karachayevo-Cherkesiya region. From Moscow we were accompanied by **Alexey Budin** of **Profi-Hunt**, a very pleasant guy who really took the hassle out of the trip. I knew it would not be an easy hunt this time. In 1998 I had hunted the Dagestan (Eastern) tur in the Vladikavkaz area, but only six weeks before I had had arthroscopic surgery in my right knee and the problems that caused that operation had kept me from running since January. My physical condition was at an all-time low before we left, but what can you do? Just go easy and do your best I think.

We were taken by car to a shepherd's hut at 1,950 meters altitude, where we stayed a night because of the rain. Next day we went three hours on horseback to reach a beautiful plateau at 2,850 meters where we put up our little tents. From this camp we went hunting. A local shepherd named **Issa** acted as guide for Alexey and me. On one side of the mountain range we saw lots of turs, but mostly females with kids, and young males. One morning we saw from our camp a herd of 45, but no big males. On the other side of that range we saw no turs, but also no signs that they could be there. What made matters really worse was my lack of conditioning that made me so depressed I even thought of quitting after a few days. But Diana, mother of all hunters, hunted with me this time!

Just before noon, the hour that I had decided I would go back to camp, we spotted a lonely male about 1,000

My hat is off to **Jan Prinsen** (Holland), who hunted in Russia during August 2007 and took a great Kuban (Western) tur despite being infected with *Bordatella pertussis*, which causes the "whooping cough," for the entire hunt. In a note Jan told me that he had contracted the illness just before leaving for Russia and at the beginning of his hunt he knew he was in weak physical condition. Like I said earlier, Jan did get his Kuban (Western) tur and this tur brings him to ten on the Capra list and six on the Ovis list. About his hunt, Jan scribes:

Mid-August, my wife and I flew to



Jan Prinsen (Holland) hunted in southern Russia during August 2007 and scored with this Kuban (Western) tur.

meters away on the side of the mountain where we had not seen any turs before. Adrenalin took over as we moved to a higher spot 500 meters closer. From there we could evaluate the animal with the riflescope of my gun, a 5- 25 PM/II from Schmidt and Bender. It is a monster of a scope but it saves carrying a spotting scope, as the optical qualities are extremely good. Fog gave us the opportunity to get real close, and from 150 meters I could shoot. Then the fun started: the animal fell 100 meters from the cliff where it stood. It took nearly 20 minutes to climb down and reach the 14-year-old male with horns measuring 86 cm. Flies had ruined the skin on the back, and the animal had been in a very poor condition for a long time. We then needed nearly five hours to get back to camp, where we stayed a few days to rest before going down

into civilization and flying home.

In an e-mail Jan sent, he wrote, "I have my doubts about the purebred Kuban (Western) tur in this region. Locals told me that they think that the real big males, including mine, may be that big because of interbreeding with the Dagestan (Eastern) tur. What do you think about this?"

Jan, this question gives me a great opportunity to point out a few things about the three species of tur and what our boundaries are. (1) Every tur taken west of Mt. Elbrus or the western border of Kabardino-Balkariya is considered to be a Kuban (Western) tur. (2) All turs taken east of the eastern border of Kabardino-Balkariya are classified as the Dagestan (Eastern) tur. (3) Only the turs taken within the Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya are what we consider to be the Mid-Caucasian tur. Now, whether I think

that the big males are a result of interbreeding of the Dagestan (Eastern) tur and the Kuban (Western) tur, I have to say no.