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FEBRUARY 2023

VOLUME 46 ■ ISSUE 8

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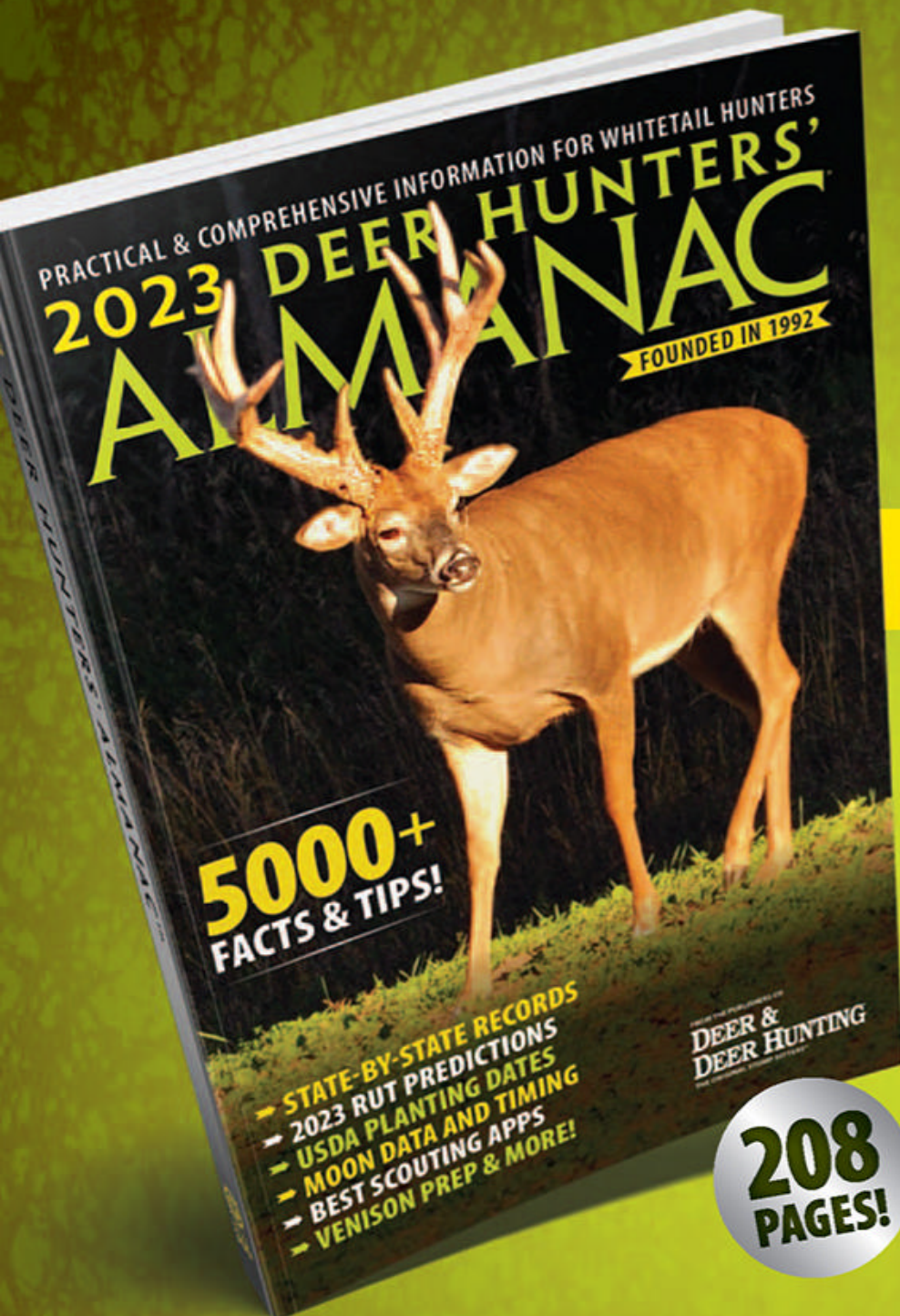
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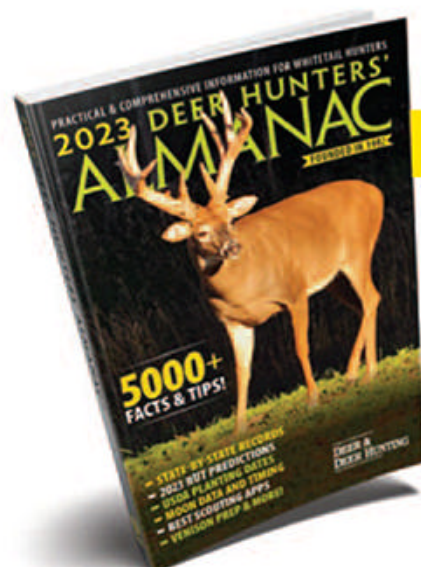
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LEADING OFF

Deer hunting rifles and calibers are often a personal choice, but some rise above the crowd when applied to terminal performance and long-distance capabilities. See Page 18 for a look at the Top 15 calibers for whitetail hunters.

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PAGE 4 – PHOTOS:

TOP: DANIEL SCHMIDT

BOTTOM LEFT: MARK VANDAM/WINDIGO

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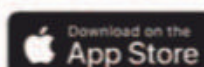
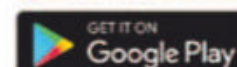


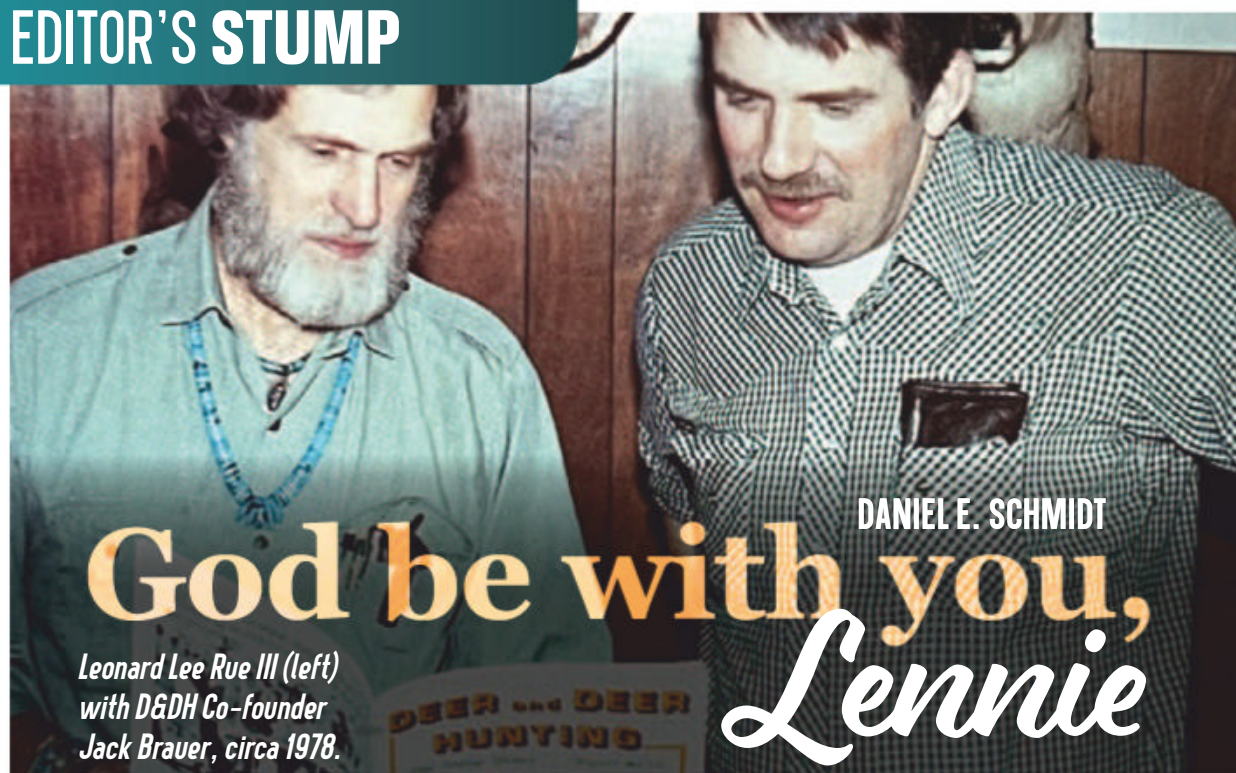
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Leonard Lee Rue III (left)
with DGDH Co-founder
Jack Brauer, circa 1978.

DANIEL E. SCHMIDT

God be with you, Lennie

It is with heavy hearts that we pass along the news that longtime DGDH contributor Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III has left this world to be with his Holy Father.

He was 96.

If there's one person who has changed the way modern American hunters understand whitetails, it's Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III. Known simply as "Lennie" to his friends, he is widely credited for his landmark insights on deer behavior. He pioneered such research when he became a private-land wildlife manager more than 65 years ago.

This legendary naturalist, author-photographer and wildlife behaviorist worked for more than 70 years and traveled to all seven continents. He compiled more than 30 books on wildlife, including the landmark "Deer of North America" (1978) that was the first and foremost source of whitetail physiology and behavior. He wrote with unparalleled authority, becoming Deer & Deer Hunting's first major contributing editor in 1977. Over the years, he penned thousands of articles and "Rue's Views" columns on deer and deer hunting. The New Jersey native's work wasn't limited to deer, but he soon became known as the father of whitetail behavior, leading the way for other greats, including Charles J. Alsheimer of western New York.

Rue traveled the world, documenting all sorts of wildlife behavior with his camera and pen. This resulted in more than 1,800 cover photos for major periodicals, including National Geographic, National

Wildlife, National Audubon, Outdoor Life, Newsweek and Time.

Although he dropped out of high school to work on the family farm during World War II, Rue received an honorary doctorate in wildlife science from Colorado State University in 1990. In 1998, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA).

He resided most of his life in New Jersey with his wife and work partner, Uschi.

I first met Lennie at the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show in 1996. It was a true encounter with one of my childhood heroes. His presence commanded the room, but his demeanor was one of sincerity, humility and true kindness. I had been editing his "Rue's Views" columns for about six months at that time, and in that short time, via phone calls, he shared so much of his knowledge – freely and willingly.

He put his arm on my shoulder and said, "It is sure nice to meet you, Daniel, my son."

Rest high on that mountain, sir. You will be missed but never forgotten.

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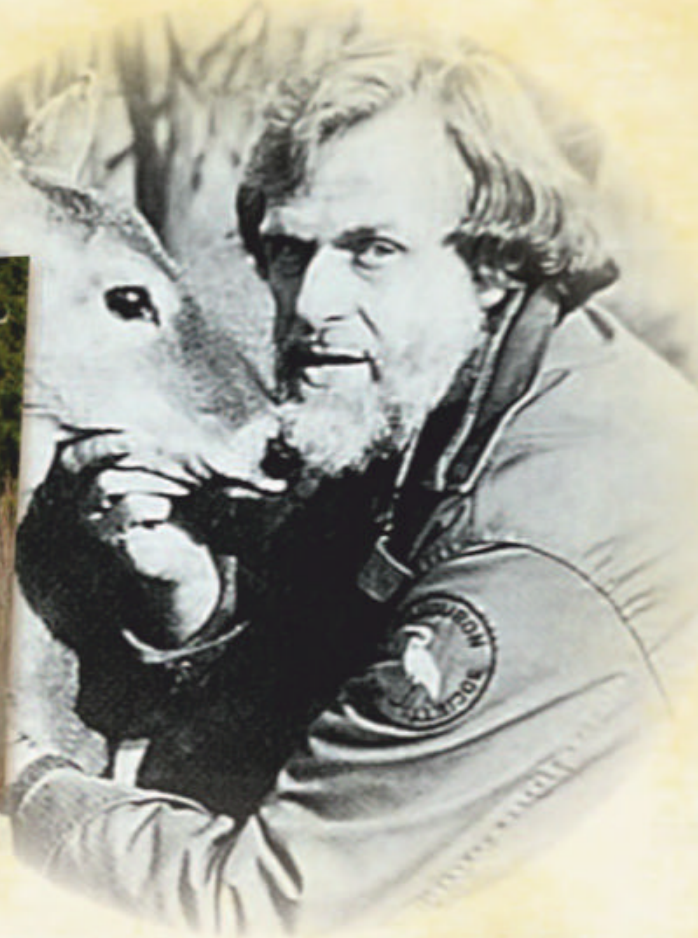
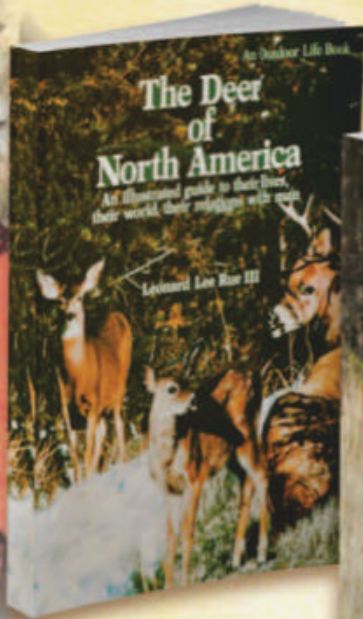
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READERS RECOIL

The passing of whitetail behaviorist Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III in November (see page 6) sent waves through the hunting community. Here's a sample of what fellow DGDH readers had to say about him on our social media pages:

Remembering DR. LEONARD LEE



RAY OLSEN

Glad to have his book, "Deer of North America," in my library. I ordered it when I was 14 years old. Rest in peace, Dr. Rue.

JAKE SZUMIGALA

One of the greats on deer. Rest easy, sir, and thank you for all you taught us.

SCOOT RAINES

I can't think of a single person that knew more about white-tailed deer than Leonard.

DAVID WHITE

I met the man. Extraordinary knowledge of the whitetail; his photography was great; and I have a signed picture, of which I will cherish.

BOB SANDERS

He was a great person. I grew up in the same town as him. He would come to our school and show slides of his photography.

CHUCK REEDER

First noticed him in Deer & Deer Hunting magazine in 1984. I've been a subscriber ever since.

MICHAEL YOCIUS

Rue's Views!

BOB WERNER

Dr. Deer! It's your time to pass and have your legacy follow you. God bless and hunt on in the heavens above!

PHIL BARNET

I got to meet Lennie several times while working in the industry. I would just say hi, sit down and listen to his stories. He could tell a story. Rest in peace, Mr. Rue.

CHUCK FELSER

I put him in the class of Charles Alsheimer. Photos and knowledge were second to none.

STEVE SORENSEN

A legend for sure to us old guys. Younger hunters should dig into his work. We can all learn a lot from him.

JEFF HUNT

His pictures of deer led me into professional photography, as well as deer hunting/guiding. He was a true inspiration!

TIM FLANIGAN

A true professional and a real gentleman who showed the way.

NANCY JO ADAMS

Wow! What an amazing life Mr. Rue lived and a long one at the age of 96. What a legacy he has left behind to be cherished for many years. Prayers sent up to his family. Godspeed.

LON LAUBER

He was one of my early mentors and heroes. He was the real deal. He will be missed.

DARRYL BRIDGES

He was a wealth of knowledge when it came to whitetails! I had the honor of meeting him twice. He was also one of the finest people you could ever meet.



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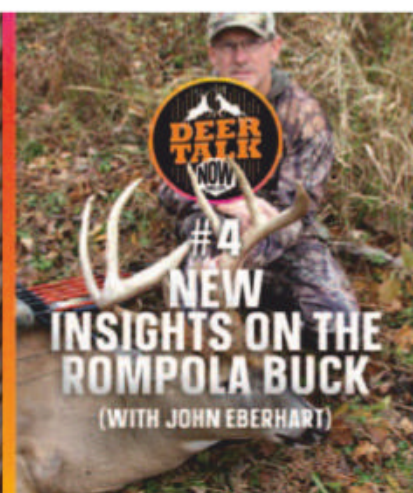


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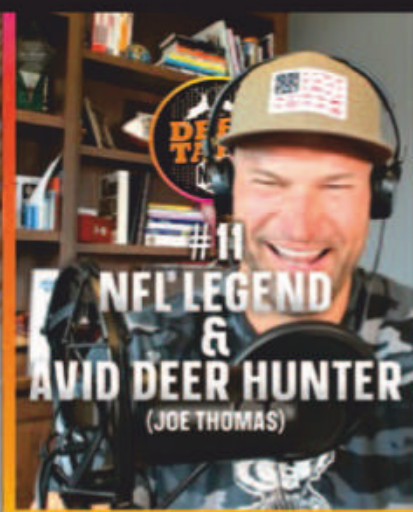
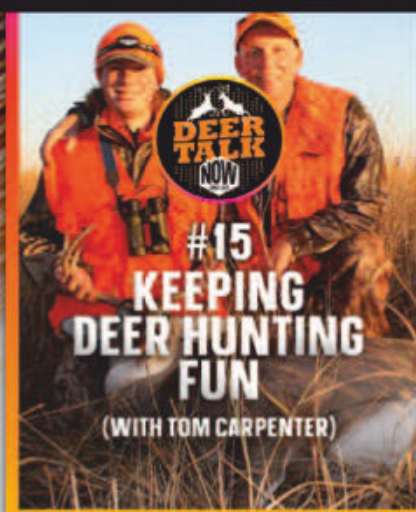




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EYEBALL

JUST HOW BIG WERE THOSE ANTLERS?

Everyone has at some point asked this question. What is the best way to handle the Moment of Truth, the moment we should be preparing to take the most high-percentage shot? To handle it right takes training, learning and self-control. That's why it is the best idea to takes does or small bucks early in your bowhunting career. Being able to think "been there, done that" is a welcome and necessary factor when a game animal you really want strolls past your stand.

TO EYEBALL

You need to be fully aware that a direct look in the wild animal world is a look of dominance and/or predation, or a close examination of something worrisome. Prey species look directly at something bothering them, to check it out. Cats and wolves ... and us, as predator species, look directly and intently at the individual selected as the next intended meal. A direct look in the wild animal world involves a threat of some sort — actual or imagined.

Even the eyes of predator and prey are positioned according to this instinct. Prey species' eyes are on the sides of their heads for widest viewing (a lot rearward, completely to the side, and a lot forward) and the most safety. Predator species' eyes are on the front of their head for best depth perception and zeroed-in focus on their prey. Perhaps you have read of small animals being frozen in terror by the stare of a snake, with some of those soon-to-be-prey individuals keeling over in terror, killed by sheer hypnotic fright. Anyone who has bowhunted at least a half-dozen times has had a similar disconcerting experience, except the result usually is immediate flight of the intended prey, not paralyzing fright or dismissal.

The reaction when prey perceives a predator is almost always quick and explosive, like the meeting of their eyes transmits brain waves or electrical impulses. We've all seen instances of an intended quarry, usually an antlered deer, suddenly and for no apparent reason look right at us, hesitate not one millisecond, wheel and turn on the afterburners. This is the famous, or infamous, sixth sense of prey animals.

What about the supposed "sixth sense" in animals, including the human animal? Does it exist? Can we, as hunters, develop it? Or is it something that some are born with, and others will hunt a lifetime without experiencing the peculiar sensation? Or is it simply something used to explain away that which is unexplainable, or to camouflage luck with a veneer of implied skill and sensitivity to the natural world?

A hunting buddy, right after he graduated college, rented a second floor flat close to his new job. The flat was above a tavern. The tavern owner had a black Labrador chained to a doghouse out back of the tavern and right below Mike's kitchen window.

Mike told me, "One time, probably waiting for bread to toast, I started looking at the dog as it lay asleep outside its house. After about 60 seconds of my looking at the dog, it woke up, stood up, looked directly up at me in my kitchen window and barked at me.

"There was absolutely no way he could have been roused by anything other than brain waves or a sixth sense. No cloud passed overhead. No train sounds or sudden increase in traffic.

"Made the hair on the back of my head stand on end, so I decided to cut it out.

"I tried that look-at-the-dog item again several times, always being sure the dog could not see

me or see any movement. I always got the same response from the dog."

"I believe in sixth sense," Mike said.

My middle brother was killed in a single-car accident in June 1968. About a week after his funeral, his dog, a big male Golden Retriever named Chip, disappeared. The dog came back a week later, but Dad said it wasn't the same dog. It had clearly aged. Dad said it also had turned white around the muzzle, but my other brother and I were never sure the dog had turned white-haired around its muzzle in a week or whether it had already turned white, but Dad never noticed because he saw the dog every day. Chip's week-long absence so soon after my brother's death was an additional shock to Dad and may have caused him to notice the white muzzle for the first time. We'll never know, and we didn't try to dissuade Dad from his belief about the fur of the dog's muzzle suddenly changing color.

Yes, those were domestic dogs, but they still were carnivorous and omnivorous animals if they were fed table scraps and dog food.

Back to wild animals ... especially those with nice antlers on their heads. Those bucks will generally be a bit older and smarter, and we tend to get much more excited.

The refrain back in camp usually goes something like this:

"I don't know what it was, but there was something he didn't like." It's a familiar lament, emphasized with a resigned shrug. "I thought I had an excellent setup. I'd approached my stand into the wind. I wasn't moving. It should have been perfect."

Shoulda ... coulda ... woulda.

There are some unknowns, maybe several. We don't know whether the hunter was staring directly at the animal's antlers or eyes, at its head, at the whole deer, or at its feet. We don't know the intensity of the stare. We don't know how much the hunter wanted to tag that animal or the size of its antlers ... or if it even had antlers. If the land was not posted and you left your stand in place, maybe someone else used that stand site recently and spooked a deer there or left a residue of human scent.

In a situation like that, we aren't going to know for certain why the prey animal suddenly looks directly at us. All we can do is speculate, although there are several common, legitimate reasons.

Downdraft thermals around tree trunks DO exist, but they must blow toward the deer. Wind eddy currents DO exist, especially around large tree trunks. (Tie a wind feather on a light piece of sewing thread to your bow's upper limb tip for the best indicator of thermal current; it is more sensitive to slight air movement than is our skin, especially when skin is covered by camo.)

We DO sometimes make slight movements we aren't aware of when we're concentrating on something. If the tree trunk is small enough or

limber enough, a slight movement of ours may cause branch tips to wiggle noticeably. Whether or not the deer is wearing nice antlers, we may be shaking a bit in excitement and not even realize it.

Sometimes our treestands make imperceptible noises imperceptible to us when we shift our weight slightly on the platform.

Also, game animals may have been somewhat trained to look up in trees. Their search, however, often ends at the first branch or clump of branches. Have your stand above those branches. They also will help hide you.

We can theorize until the cows come home, so let's take another look at the infamous sixth sense. The brainwaves, or electrical impulses, or whatever you wish to call them, go from us to them and are picked up. This situation also causes questions. What exactly was the hunter staring at on the animal so fixedly? Probably the antlers. What was the intensity of the stare, as it relates to the muscular or mental tension or excitement level of the hunter? What was the degree to which they wanted to tag that animal? We may have corresponding unawareness of what we may or may not be doing as the animal approaches.

There seems every reason to believe that as our excitement increases, our brain wave intensity ought to increase, or the signals become stronger and transmitted farther. As our intensity increases, we become more prone to little movements and twitches, of which we're not aware because our attention is directed outward.

There is one species, however, where things sort of work in reverse — black bears. The animal doesn't have antlers to get excited about, but a bear instills a fear in us of the animal itself because it could harm us. Thus, they often look larger than they are. We shoot. We bag the animal. We walk up to it ... and it has shrunk. It's nowhere near the size it was when it was at the bait. Ground shrinkage is a variation in our perception of wildlife, but the same lines of excitement are there.

As humans, we're visually cued. We trust our eyes more than our nose or our ears. It's natural for us to zero in on the eyes, even though we should be paying more attention to the animal's body language, i.e., its muscle tension, its ear movements or positions, its tail movements or position.

We don't do that until we train ourselves to do that. Besides, in our world there are some direct looks that are inviting, not threatening. The wild world has more than direct looks to issue invitations, and so do we, but we depend more on the eyes and the voice.

Photographers have long known that when they have an animate subject, if they have a shallow depth of field they will have an acceptable photo to the human eye and mind, if they focus on the subject's eyes and forget about the lack of sharpness of the remainder of the animate object. Antlers are on the head near the eyes, so naturally that's where we look first.

So what do we do?

When an animal first comes into view it may not be within high-percentage shot range. With the animal that far away, you most likely will be looking at the whole scene, probably glancing ahead of the animal to pick an area for a clear shot when the intended target arrives at the right area.

If the animal appears within range, you had better be trying to find a shooting avenue if you haven't already done so, and picking a good aiming spot on the animal. There's no time then to be looking at the head and eyes, and there's no need to.

Never look directly at the eyes. That's not where we're going to aim, anyway.

As the animal nears (such as head on), you may be vulnerable. Keep your eyes shut and bring your hearing into play. But what do you do if the animal is looking right at you? When you open your eyes, it may catch the blink. It may react with alarm to your suddenly open, round predator eyes. Round, staring eyes are the mark of a predator, especially when part of a direct look.

The times when big-game animals have been most likely to suddenly look directly at me are when they have approached from in front of me. I would see them coming; I knew I would have to freeze so they could walk past me, or I could turn for a good shot as they passed and maybe spook them. I had plenty of time to do nothing other than watch them and let the fever rise. It's as if my brain waves were directed right with my vision.

We could say that you should look-off the animal, just as a quarterback looks-off his primary receiver, hoping to fake out the defensive backs, then coming back with a direct look at the intended receiver only at the last instant.

Look at the ears. That gives you a good area to cue your actions on, as well as being a small enough spot to focus on so you'll stay away from the eyes — even though they are near the ears. Ears and head/neck attitude will tell you a lot about the relative state of relaxation or nervousness of the approaching animal.

Better yet, look at other body parts that provide cues. You may find this easier to avoid the eyes and head.

You can set your stand so the animal is likely to approach from behind you. You won't see it approaching. It won't see you. When it moves past your stand, it will be looking ahead, not seeing you. Then you will have a quartering-away shot at an unalarmed animal.

If you're on the ground and see an animal you want to move in on (such as a pronghorn), but which also could see you, you might want to go so far as not even looking at the animal. Pretend you're just another nonthreatening animal that just happens to be moving in or through the area. Force yourself to feel and act as unconcerned as possible, as disinterested in that animal as you possibly could be.

You will keep it in your peripheral vision and suddenly be close enough to a (hopefully) unalarmed animal to have a good shot. When doing this, you walk north while looking west, so to speak, angling closer to the animal without appearing to do so. This sometimes works on

pronghorns feeding on the prairie. Of course, sometimes it doesn't. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, when there are no other options.

Many wild animals are perfectly willing to stand still and let us walk by if they think they haven't been detected or are not threatened. Especially when you're bent over and not looking like a human profile.

Many wild animals are curious, too. If you're acting in a nonthreatening way in their sight, you may trigger their curiosity and not scare them. So, then, do you hide? Or what do you do? Whitetails often rush out of sight when startled, then stop and look back to discover what startled them. What's your next move? Can you change course and sneak up on them? Maybe, if you wait for them to dismiss the supposed danger.

The animal may be more concerned about being alarmed in that area than by your attempt to fool it. If you do get close enough, you most assuredly will have

AS THE ANIMAL NEARS (SUCH AS HEAD ON), YOU MAY BE VULNERABLE. KEEP YOUR EYES SHUT AND BRING YOUR HEARING INTO PLAY. BUT WHAT DO YOU DO IF THE ANIMAL IS LOOKING RIGHT AT YOU? WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR EYES, IT MAY CATCH THE BLINK. IT MAY REACT WITH ALARM TO YOUR SUDDENLY OPEN, ROUND PREDATOR EYES. ROUND, STARING EYES ARE THE MARK OF A PREDATOR, ESPECIALLY WHEN PART OF A DIRECT LOOK.

to move smoothly, and probably slowly, to draw and aim without appearing to pay much attention to them. This obviously isn't the easiest thing to do, but it has been done, usually by bowhunters who can say "been there, done that."

Whether or not you succeed, the approach will be exciting hunting, and you most likely will learn something. No matter what the circumstances and outcome, because of our biological makeup, eye position and predatory nature, it will take willpower and training to

avoid looking at the animal's eyes and head.

Practice it, because it takes practice and experience to remain as calm as necessary at the moment of truth. Then, when that time comes, you will be better equipped to make the things happen that you want to happen.



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ALAN CLEMONS

Idaho Fish and Game Nabs 5 on More Than 50 Violations

Five men were sentenced to a combined \$21,975 in fines, 15 years in license revocations — with an additional 24 years if probation is violated — 34 years of probation, 330 hours of community service in lieu of jail, and four pronghorns forfeited.

The investigation started as a simple phone call to Idaho Fish and Game about trespassing in the Pahsimeroi Valley during the 2021 pronghorn archery season. That led to an extensive investigation with more than 50 wildlife charges filed against five southwest Idaho men.

Charges were filed in six Idaho counties where the crimes occurred and included trespassing, malicious injury to property, unlawfully taken bass, spearfishing violations, hunting turkeys with electronic calls, as well as multiple deer and pronghorn hunting violations. Many additional charges could not be filed because of the one-year statute of limitation on species other than big game.

Penalties were recently issued in multiple counties, including August 2022 in Custer County, to the five wildlife violators including:

— Todd A. Phillips, of Fruitland, was found guilty of five charges, while seven additional charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. He received \$6,900 in fines, 12 years of probation, 12-year hunting license revocation with seven years suspended unless he violates his probation, 100 hours of community service in lieu of jail, and forfeiture of his 2020 and 2021 pronghorn. He also pleaded guilty to a turkey hunting violation in Payette County and received a \$350 fine and paid a \$1,000 bond forfeiture for deer hunting violations in Adams County. As part of his sentencing and probation in Payette County, he cannot be in possession of any weapon, including crossbows, air guns, bows or firearms, where hunting activities can or are taking place.

— Darin Phillips, of Fruitland, was found guilty of five charges, while two additional charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. He received \$6,300 in fines, 10 years of probation, 10-year hunting license revocation with five years suspended unless he violates his probation, and 100 hours of community service in lieu of jail.

— Braeden T. Phillips, of Payette, was found guilty of three charges. He received \$3,970 in fines, six years of probation, nine-year hunting license revocation with six years suspended unless he violates his probation, and 60 hours of community service in lieu of jail. In addition, his 2021 pronghorn was forfeited, and he paid a \$400 bond forfeiture in Kootenai County for two spearfishing violations.

— Jacob Phillips, of Fruitland, was found guilty of two charges, while four other charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. He received \$990 in fines, four years of probation, five-year hunting license revocation, and 50 hours of community service in lieu of jail. Since Jacob was under 21 at the time, his hunting privileges can be

notebook



reinstated after one year if he completes a hunter education course. Jacob also pleaded guilty to one charge in Payette County and received a \$400 fine.

— Jeff Mosso, of Parma, was found guilty of one charge, while three other charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. He received \$1,665 in fines, two years of probation, three-year license suspension with two years suspended unless he violates probation, and 20 hours of community service in lieu of jail.

“That initial phone call from the public was crucial,” said Chad Wippermann, the Fish and Game conservation officer who led the investigation. “It’s what started the entire investigation.”

When Wippermann responded to the call, the suspects were long gone. But evidence at the scene showed vehicle tracks through an alfalfa field that ended at a small pool of blood and hair. It appeared that someone had shot a pronghorn in the field, drove to and loaded it without field dressing it. Pronghorn archery season was in progress, but the landowner had not given anyone permission.

After interviewing other hunters in the area and obtaining a vehicle description, Wippermann learned the suspects lived in Payette County. Two days later, he was alerted to a vehicle vandalism in the Pahsimeroi Valley, where someone had thrown a pronghorn onto the vehicle’s hood leaving blood, hair and several dents.

Wippermann and a team of Fish and Game officers launched an investigation that involved multiple interviews of the suspects in Fruitland, Payette and Parma. Through the investigation, officers learned of numerous other Fish and Game violations beyond the trespassing. Officers discovered evidence showing pronghorns being chased with a vehicle, and pronghorns being shot at from their vehicle windows with crossbows, and at least once with a rifle, during the 2020 and 2021 archery seasons. Additional violations detected include killing waterfowl and upland game birds during the closed season, killing protected species, hunting during closed seasons or at night, hunting without tags or licenses, as well as vandalizing the vehicle in the Pahsimeroi Valley of Custer County.



| JOSH HONEYCUTT

THE **15** BEST DEER HUNTING CALIBERS

A LOOK AT THE BEST CALIBERS THAT
DEER HUNTERS SHOULD CONSIDER
THIS SEASON.



Deer hunters are as serious as any enthusiast, especially regarding gear. They want what they want, and if it doesn't meet standards, it's on to the next thing. Fortunately, when you select quality, there's little to no need to move on to another option. Those who do their research, and know what they want, generally get it right the first time. And for those who plan to purchase a deer hunting caliber, if they know what boxes need checking, the following 15 calibers are some of the best in the deer hunting world.

.223 REMINGTON

Born in the 1960s, the .223 Rem. is much the same as the 5.56mm NATO round. It is a small round and doesn't pack a punch. Still, it's practical for smaller-bodied whitetails in the South. It's ideal for youth and smaller-framed shooters who might be sensitive to recoil. With a well-placed shot, a deer isn't going very far.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

40-70 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

3,100-3,200 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

1,300-1,400 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

.243 WINCHESTER

Created in 1955, the .243 Win. is a practical caliber. Like the .223 Rem., it isn't a large load and doesn't carry much energy. However, with a well-placed shot, this caliber is more than capable of effectively downing whitetails. Unfortunately, despite being a great 200-yard gun, and slightly beyond, it comes with moderate bullet drop.



AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

85-100 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

3,200-3,300 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

1,900-2,000 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

.25-06 REMINGTON

Inspired by the .25 Nadier during the World Wars, the .25-06 Rem. quickly became a popular deer hunting caliber. Thanks to sleek bullet designs, high velocities, flat-shooting abilities, and long-distance capabilities, this caliber is an excellent option. That said, it does come with drawbacks, including some recoil, lower ballistic coefficient, and more wind drift than other calibers.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

100 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

3,300-3,400 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,300-2,400 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

6.5 CREEDMOOR

The 6.5 Creedmoor hit the scene in 2007. It took off quickly due to being a very accurate platform with a high ballistic coefficient, reduced wind factor, flat trajectory, and longer-range abilities. It even comes with manageable recoil and a great selection of bullets.

TOP CALIBERS FOR RECOIL-SENSITIVE SHOOTERS

Some shooters who are younger or smaller framed might not have the build to handle heavy recoil. These shooters might need something that is easier to handle and that doesn't kick quite as hard. Some of the best options include:

.223 REMINGTON

.224 VALKYRIE

.243 WINCHESTER

.257 ROBERTS

.25-06 REMINGTON

.260 REMINGTON

6.4 CREEDMOOR

.350 LEGEND

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

140 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,700-2,800 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,200-2,300 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

.270 WINCHESTER

Created nearly 100 years ago, the .270 Win. is very popular and was made famous by Jack O'Connor and his writings. It remains one of the most popular calibers in the modern world. This great caliber offers a smaller diameter bullet that's crazy fast. Interestingly, it's quite like the .280 Rem., but is more popular due to heavy marketing efforts. And with similar bullet design in play, it has more energy beyond 200 yards than a .30-06. This caliber works well out to 500-plus yards.



COURTESY OF VISTA OUTDOORS

NEW AMMO FOR THIS SEASON

Each year, new ammunition offerings hit the market, and consumers immediately take notice. This is something for deer hunters to recognize, as the latest products sometimes offer advantages you can't get elsewhere. Here are some of the best.

BERGER AMMUNITION ELITE HUNTER

Berger Ammunition's Elite Hunter is available in 6.5 and 300 PRC. In 6.5, it's a 156-grain bullet, and in 300, it is a 205-grain bullet. Both are optimized for a high ballistic coefficient. It also delivers a hybrid profile for long-range precision.

REMINGTON CORE-LOKT TIPPED

Remington Ammunition now offers the next generation of Big Green's Core-Lokt. The company releases the new Core-Lokt Tipped. It features better ballistic coefficient, flight accuracy, and can initiate rapid expansion. Choose from 13 popular calibers ranging from 243 Win. to 300 WSM.

HORNADY SUBSONIC IN .350 LEGEND

Hornady now offers its Subsonic ammo in .350 Legend. This is a top seller due to less recoil and good range. This load even offers increased expansion. People like the round, and they are using it in bolt-action and AR-style rifles.

HORNADY CX

The Hornady CX (copper alloy expanding), is one of the most advanced monolithic hunting bullets on the market. An optimized design increases accuracy, performance, penetration, and range. It even sports high weight retention (up to 95%), better aerodynamic, and reduced bearing surface and fouling. Choose from 16 calibers from .243 to .375.

WINCHESTER COPPER IMPACT

Winchester's Copper Impact now offers additional popular calibers and heavy-hitting bullet weights. These bullets have longer ogives and boattails, which provide higher ballistic coefficients, and increases accuracy at longer distances. It also provides large-impact diameter. These come in a dozen options, including 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.8 Western, 300 Win. Mag., etc.

FEDERAL PREMIUM HAMMERDOWN

The new HammerDown by Federal Premium provides improved cycling and performance. Most will experience better performance with this load than traditional lever-action rounds. Furthermore, velocities of this all-new load are customized to produce superior ballistics and terminal performance. The geometry of each round's case improves cycling through tubular magazine and typical lever-action feeding systems. This is offered in eight different calibers.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

150 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,900-3,000 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,800-2,900 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT

.280 REMINGTON

The .280 Rem. is older than the .270, but less popular. Still, it is arguably a better round. But it remains less popular, much in part due to Jack O'Connor's writings of the .270 Win. Overall, this caliber is fast shooting, has a fairly flat trajectory, and comes with manageable recoil. While very similar, it's better than the .30-06 in some ways, but worse in others.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

165 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,800-2,900 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,900-3,000 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT

7MM-08 REMINGTON

Established in 1980, the 7mm-08 Rem. offers light recoil, and is comparable to a .243 or .25-06. Its bullet diameter is like that of a .280, providing ample entry and exit wounds. It also has a lot of powder behind the bullet, increasing energy transfer loads upon impact. Overall, this is a flat-shooting gun out to 200-300 yards, but is not a long-range weapon.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

140 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,700-2,800 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,400-2,500 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT



THE SHOOTING STICK THAT GOES FROM **8 INCHES TO OVER 60 INCHES** (and everything in-between)

Serious shooters know the value of shooting sticks, but for many years hunters have avoided using them due to their bulky nature and clumsy design. The new Solid Aim Shooting stick eliminates these flaws, giving you a sturdy solid shooting platform in a quickly deployable and ultra-compact design. At only 8 inches, the Solid Aim shooting stick will easily fit into a pocket or pack, yet still allows you to adjust from 8 inches to over 60 inches in an instant. Best of all it works with rifles, shotguns, pistols, and crossbows. Use it while stalking, in blinds, and even in tree stands.

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Pull the foot to extend length

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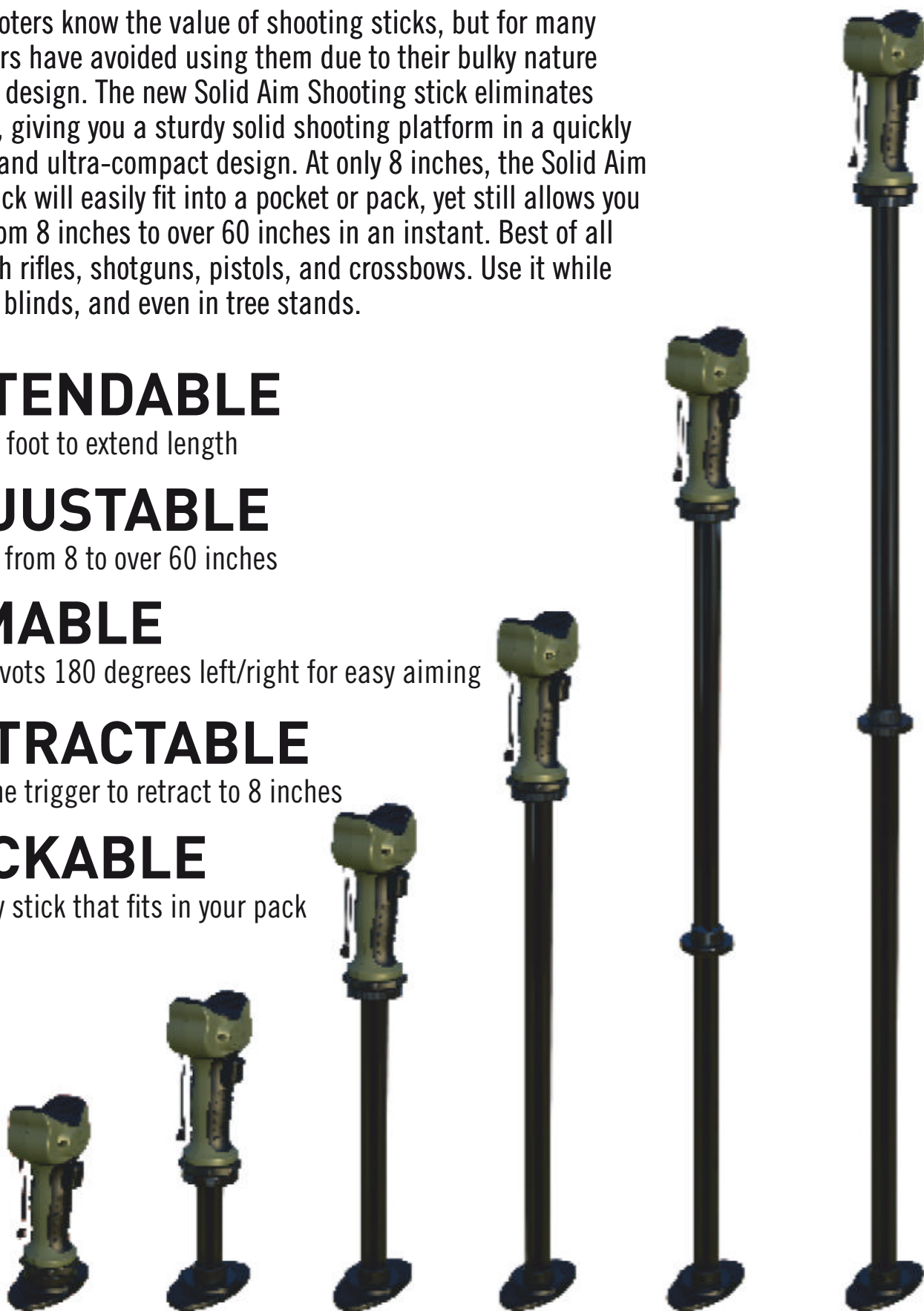
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GUN HUNTING MYTHS

As with any topic, a flurry of myths surround gun hunting. Some of these you might now about, and others might be unique to you. Either way, here are some myths to abolish from your mind, as well as others. Myths include:

A super clean barrel is better for accuracy.
Truth: Slight fowling is better for accuracy than something that's squeaky clean.

A longer barrel always guarantees great accuracy.
Truth: There are additional factors that influence accuracy, not merely barrel length.

A bigger caliber guarantees bigger and shorter blood trails.
Truth: Large calibers oftentimes don't get pass-throughs. Generally, a well-placed shot from any caliber is better than a subpar shot from a larger one.

Bore sighting your gun is enough time at the range.
Truth: This can save you time, energy, and money. But it is not a substitute for sighting in.

Bullets rise (in relation to the bore line) as they come out of the gun.
Truth: While they do rise due to a higher hold, a bullet drops in relation to the axis of the bore center line.

Dented bullet tips greatly impact accuracy.
Truth: They don't have as great of an impact as you would think.

Guns recoil can propel people plum backward.
Truth: It can get you good, but you shouldn't be suddenly lifted off the ground and sent soaring backward, unless you're using a large canon or operate a firearm very improperly.

Gunshots scare deer off.
Truth: That's not always true. I've seen it many times.

Handloads are always more accurate than factory ammo.
Truth: Handloads are only as good as those who make them. It takes time to master this skill.

Higher numbers of foot pounds are necessary to get the job done.
Truth: Even 1,000 foot pounds, or slightly less, is enough to get the job done.

Round-nose bullets hit harder.
Truth: These lose velocity quicker due to larger surface areas, effectively hitting deer less hard than they would if designed differently.

Round-nose bullets are better brush guns.
Truth: These tend to have a worse ballistic coefficient, don't shoot as flat, and have more surface area to connect with brush.



Understanding how well ammunition performs out of a particular caliber is valuable information.

HONEYCUTT CREATIVE PHOTOS

.30-30 WINCHESTER

The .30-30 Win. is about 125 years old. It is said that the .30-30 has killed more whitetails than any other caliber. Obviously, it's a very trusted caliber. This caliber is solid inside of 150 yards but does fine out to 175-200 yards. It has moderate recoil. Ammunition is fairly easy to find and is priced affordably.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

150 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,300-2,400 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

1,800-1,900 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

LEVER

.308 WINCHESTER

More than 70 years old, the .308 Win. is a long-range rifle caliber. That said, it has more bullet drop and less energy than a .270 or .30-06. Still, it offers solid knock-down power, manageable recoil, and more. It's great for deer and most other big game.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

150 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,700-2,800 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:

2,700-2,800 FT. LBS.

COMMON PLATFORM(S):

BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

.30-06 SPRINGFIELD

The .30-06 is now more than 100 years old. Nonetheless, it remains a great all-around big-game cartridge. It's been a very popular caliber throughout the decades, and that shouldn't change. That said, some people love this caliber, while others prefer similar "but superior" options. To their point, it does offer lower velocities than other calibers, especially calibers slightly larger than it. On the plus side, there is solid ammunition availability.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:

150 GRAINS

AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:

2,700-2,800 FPS

AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
2,400-2,500 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
BOLT



HENRY BIG BOY ALL-WEATHER SIDE GATE

.300

WINCHESTER MAGNUM

Created in 1963, the .300 Win. Mag. offers excellent long-range capabilities. It's great for whitetails and other big game. This caliber doesn't always get a pass-through, but it delivers incredible energy transfer upon impact, effectively producing top-shelf knock-down power. To that point, short-range shots can create a lot of meat tissue damage. Furthermore, it does come with heavy recoil. And while there is good ammunition availability, it's pretty pricey compared to other options. But the energy is unparalleled in its class.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:
150 GRAINS
AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:
3,300-3,400 FPS
AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
3,900-4,000 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
BOLT

.350 LEGEND

The latest straight-wall caliber to hit the market, the .350 Legend hit the market in 2019. Despite being so new, it is likely the best caliber in that department. In most ways, it's a superior option to the former king of straight-wall ammunition — the .450 bushmaster.

The .350 produces minimal recoil, works great out to 250 yards, but starts dropping significantly once you reach 250 yards. On the upside, ammunition is widely produced and is priced more affordably than most medium to large calibers.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:
150 GRAINS
AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:
2,300-2,400 FPS
AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
1,800-1,900 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
BOLT, SEMI-AUTO

LEVER-ACTION LOVE

Some hunters are searching for a great lever gun. They should consider a variety of options, including the following. Because deer hunters need a good gun they can trust and that doesn't break the bank. A solid option is the **STEEL LEVER ACTION .30-30 SIDE GATE** (www.henryusa.com/rifles/steel-lever-action-30-30-side-gate/). It's a very accurate lever gun chambered in .30-30.

Another excellent option is the **BIG BOY ALL-WEATHER SIDE GATE** (www.henryusa.com/rifles/all-weather-big-boy/). This sleek gun is incredibly durable, reliable, smooth, and more. It's an optimal deer hunting rifle. It even holds 10 rounds and comes chambered in .357 Mag./ .38 Spl., .44 Mag./ .44 Spl., or .45 Colt.

Lastly, if you want a remarkable lever gun that's practical and looks incredibly slick, the **BIG BOY COLOR CASE HARDENED SIDE GATE** (www.henryusa.com/rifles/big-boy-color-case-hardened-side-gate) is another offering. It looks and shoots like a dream. It also holds 10 rounds. This one comes chambered in .357 Mag./ .38 Spl., .44 Mag./ .44 Spl., or .45 Colt.

.444 MARLIN

Created in 1964, the .444 Marlin was designed to replace the .45-70 Government. At the time, the latter wasn't being produced as much, and hunters were looking for an alternative, yet similar, solution. Overall, this caliber produces serious power. Recoil and ammo prices are quite high, though.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:
265 GRAINS
AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:
2,200-2,300 FPS
AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
3,000-3,100 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
LEVER

.450 BUSHMASTER

Touted as the king of straight-wall rifles since about 2007, the .450 Bushmaster remains a great caliber for deer hunting. It's likely been dethroned as the best straight-wall caliber thanks to the .350 Legend, but for those who want knock-down power over all else, and that checks other boxes, the .450 is still the best option. It delivers heavy energy transfers upon impact. Unfortunately, it produces a lot of recoil, which isn't good for those sensitive to it. Furthermore, this caliber drops about 4-5 inches between 100 and 200 yards. Lastly, it isn't cheap to shoot, costing around \$3 per round, but that isn't as expensive as other options.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:
270 GRAINS
AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:
2,200-2,300 FPS
AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
2,600-2,700 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
LEVER

.45-70 GOVERNMENT

The .45-70 was introduced in 1873. Another straight-wall caliber, it produces large entry and exits. Also, it carries significant knock-down power. The flip side of that coin is heavy recoil, pricey ammunition, and decreased ammunition availability. Still, for knock-down power junkies, this is a great selection for deer hunting.

AVERAGE BULLET WEIGHT:
300 GRAINS
AVERAGE MUZZLE VELOCITY:
1,800-1,900 FPS
AVERAGE MUZZLE ENERGY:
2,200-2,300 FT. LBS.
COMMON PLATFORM(S):
LEVER





A photograph of a deer in a forest during autumn. The deer is in the lower half of the frame, facing right, with its brown fur and white tail tip visible. The background is filled with trees and foliage in shades of green, yellow, and orange, creating a bokeh effect. The title text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

GET READY FOR Next SEASON

I enjoy swapping and reviewing chips. That's a given for many hunters. That said, my two favorite swaps of the year are the first late summer swap and the first after gun seasons are closed. The first tells me what I have, while the second gives me a good picture of what next season could potentially become.

Today, let's focus on getting a thorough inventory of bucks after the gun seasons are closed, as that's either happening or will be real soon. Unlike when I was a kid and believed that nary a single buck could have possibly survived the orange army's onslaughts, a bunch do every year. Here's how I've inventoried the survivors for many years running, now.

PILING IT ON

Where legal, simply offering a single bait pile per 40 acres will turn up most every buck. Now, they may well be showing up at midnight, but a picture and/or video of them is really all we need for our inventory of next year's potential class.

When determining bait sites for inventory purposes, strive to strike a balance between low impact and selecting spots the deer will willingly feed. Though I'm far from an expert on baiting for inventories or hunting, it merely stands to reason that we never want to needlessly spook the deer on our hunting grounds.

I'm confident that those placing bait piles for hunting should be much more willing to create a

pile on the outer edge of Mr. Big's daylight core area, as that'd offer higher odds of picking up daylight movements. Heck, I actually know a guy from a legal baiting state that is rather successful at doing exactly that.

Remember, we're not talking hunting in this piece. We're talking getting an inventory after the gun seasons close.

What's going on then? Well, at least in the Midwestern and Northern states, the herd is facing their nutritional low point for the year, as nature just isn't kicking the nutrition she is during spring, summer and fall, for the Midwestern and Northern herds.

At the same time, Mr. Big has just made it through the rut and has lost an average of 25-30% body weight. He needs food and food is in comparatively short supplies. In other words, he's dang hungry and typically more than willing to travel a bit for the limited available food right now.

Use that to your advantage by placing the bait piles in easy, low impact locations. In Northern Wisconsin, and many other areas, people get deer to feed under motion detection triggered lights,

right in their backyards. Trust me, we can error on the ease and low impact side for this.

FOOD AND WATER SOURCES

The reality is that many areas don't allow baiting. I actually happen to do all my management work in areas that don't, and have for quite a few years running, now.

When that's the case, targeting natural and farm crop foods is a good start, for the exact same reasons the bait piles are so prevalent where legal. Everything has stacked up right now to make food king for the Midwestern and Northern bucks.

In states with three plus feet of snow cover, standing corn or beans are golden, but most just won't have access to them. Assuming one either has standing crops in the deeper snow areas or crop waste from harvesting in lesser snow depth areas, covering any pinches in the field and major entrance trails, pointing out into the crops, is a great start. With the right placement, one can pickup all the deer using the trail and those feeding out into the crops, as well.

In the Midwest and points



Even alfalfa fields get more overwinter feeding than we have been led to believe, assuming it's not covered in deep snow.

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Scrapes can be great places to inventory bucks year round, assuming they're the few used as communications hubs.

south, don't forget the cereal rye, clover, wheat, oats and even alfalfa plantings. Assuming they aren't covered with many feet of snow, all are common overwinter food sources in areas they're available.

In the absence of farm crops in the lower snow depth areas, look for mast crops, meadows and pockets of quality woody browse. A common misnomer is that woody browse is a northern, big woods whitetail's food. It most certain is, but it is an important part of even the Midwestern farm belt deer's diet. That said, setting up on browse in the big woods, deep snow areas is often a best and only good food bet.

The water portion is easy enough

to understand, assuming you can find a good, available source. During much of the year, the deer's food is offering much if not all the water a deer needs, simply from its moisture content. Dead and dormant plant life tends to offer far less moisture content, making water sources more attractive than much of the rest of the year.

SCRAPING UP PICTURES

Another good setup in and around active food sources are placing cams on the area's still active scrapes. What many don't realize is that deer will use a few, select scrapes year-round. Nope, during the "off scrape seasons" the

bucks aren't tearing at the ground or urinating over their hocks much at all. Instead, they typically just work the lick branch.

Think of these scrapes as the local coffee shops that all the locals go to, once the A&Ws, Dairy Queens and pop up stands, the majority of scrapes made in fall, have shut down for the year. These year round scrapes are much like that local diner, gas station or other spots the farmers and other locals can pop a squat and catch up on everything the neighbors are doing.

Though not close to all of last year's most heavily used scrapes become these year-round info sources, most all of the scrapes worked year-round do come from last year's most heavily used scrapes.

Those that do tend to have the following in common:

They exist in areas deer frequent year round, such as the intersections of heavily used travel corridors, year round food sources and around established, consistent bedding areas that the bucks are naturally passing.

The lick branch literally sticks out like a sour thumb. Remember, this is advertising and communicating, much like human billboards. The more they stick out, in high traffic areas, the better. After the scrape phase has wound down, it's now the lick branch that does the visual drawing, not the earth they're now rarely scraping.

These scrapes are rarely worked close to as often as they were during scrape season, but most every buck in the area will check them every week to four weeks, leaving a bit of their own scent on the lick branch for those that come after.



Even though it's after the gun season, we still don't want to needlessly spook the resident deer. Cell cams can be great tools for getting intel at low-impact levels.

Once the lick branch is destroyed, the year-round scrape typically dies, UNLESS you merely attach another suitable licking branch. When one continually does, they can often keep these year-round scrapes going for as many years as one keeps an acceptable lick branch in place or until something massively changes.

DON'T FORGET THE GIRLS

Speaking of setting cams on what most think of as old and stale locations, don't forget to setup around established doe bedding areas. Yes, the peak breeding is now in the rearview mirror, but fawns will continue trickling in for quite some time.

At the same time, with our weather "patterns" now so out of control, Mother Nature isn't consistently forcing death upon the fawns that are born overly early or late. In turn, those surviving doe fawns breeding cycles then often hits earlier or later, depending on which side they're born on.

In other words, there are still a few breeding opportunities to be had. You can bet Mr. Big realizes that. He also realizes that doe bedding areas are the best places to find these now limited opportunities.

Add it all up and the pinch points around or leading

too or from these bedding areas are good places for placing cams to inventory what bucks we have left. In absence of a constrictive setup, the best old scrapes aren't bad at all.

DON'T COUNT CHICKENS BEFORE THEY HATCH

Outside of the baiting option, these are the exact placements I have used for many years running, now. The results have been consistently good snap shots of what's still alive in the deer woods, coming out of season. This gives me a really good indication of what the following season could become.

Notice I said could. There are all sorts of reasons deer die, and a bunch of them tend to occur before spring green up. Heck, very many of the deer that are written off as winter kill truly died as the results of the beatings they literally and figuratively took during the rut. Now add in vehicles, natural predators, disease, infections from insects, on and on and on.

Sorry to end on a bit of a bummer, but it's important to realize that just because Mr. Big survived the battles, doesn't mean he makes it to next year's war. Taking it for granted he will is eventually going to result in one hunting dead deer that aren't there.

No, this does not tell us what we'll have to hunt next year. It tells us what is possible, with the right breaks.

CONCLUSION

Taking a post gun season census isn't for everyone. In more than a few places, deer shift with the seasons to meet their needs, If the deer are shifting off your hunting grounds, this won't likely do much to help.

That said, if they stick fairly consistently to that area or have yet to shift, these methods can give us a pretty solid view of what next year could potentially become.

— Steve Bartylla is host of *DeerTopia TV* on Pursuit Channel, airing as part of our two-hour "Saturday Night Deer Camp" block of programming.



If one doubts at all that late breeding occurs, merely look at this string of pictures captured earlier this fall. The date is correct, despite the fawn appearing to be way too young for October.

BY MOET GOMES,
AUBURN UNIVERSITY DEER LAB

YOU CAN'T EAT THE 'HORNS' ... OR CAN YOU?

A CLOSER LOOK AT OSTEOPHAGY
IN WHITE-TAILED DEER.



While many deer hunters are happy to harvest both bucks and does, you may have met some deer hunters only interested in hunting to fill the freezer: “Well, you can’t eat the horns!” Yeah, they might be right; *you* will probably not eat the antlers on that beautiful 10-point buck that you shot last year. And while you sure are grateful for all the meat that big buck put in your freezer last season, you begin to ponder this phrase you have heard time and time again. You’ve gone shed hunting every year — while it doesn’t beat deer hunting season, finding those shed antlers can feel like finding small treasures left behind by your favorite game species. You also know the frustration of finding a beautiful shed, only to see you were not the first creature to find it, as evidenced by teeth marks and chewed up points all over what would have been your beautiful curio. While *you* may not eat the antlers, *something else* sure seems to be eating them. There are the obvious culprits: mice, squirrels, and other rodents hungry for that calcium-rich antler. But did you ever consider that the producer of those antlers may also steal a snack from them?





The consumption of bones, termed osteophagy, is extremely common in nature. While it may be unsurprising that predators frequently crush and chew on bones, and rodents can easily nibble into them, you may be surprised to learn that herbivores often partake in this practice as well. Yes, that's right—your plant-eating, no-top-front-teeth, cud-chewing white-tailed deer could also be munching on bones out in the woods. And while it may be a little disturbing to imagine a deer ready to eat a skeleton, this behavior is a testament to how well these animals are able to adapt to their environment and utilize every nutritional resource available to them. When you take a deeper look into the nutrients available in antlers and bones, you may understand why osteophagy presents a great opportunity for deer to meet their nutritional needs.

WHAT'S IN AN ANTLER?

A hardened antler is made up of two different bone types: spongy

bone and compact or cortical bone. The outer portion of an antler is comprised of stiff and sturdy compact bone. Compact bone has a greater density than spongy bone, creating a durable exterior that prevents antler breakage. The softer, less-dense spongy bone makes up the inner core of the antler and comprises about half of the diameter of an antler. During antler growth, when antlers are not completely hardened and calcified, this spongy bone is filled with vasculature, or a network of blood vessels, that helps to transport hormones and nutrients to growing antler tissues. When antlers harden, this vascularization is lost, leaving behind a porous and hardened inner antler. This inner porous bone that remains can help deer antlers to absorb the shock of intense competition and antler clashes between males (similar to the way the spongy padding inside a football helmet helps soften the blow of a hard hit).

NUTRITIONAL DEMANDS OF DEER

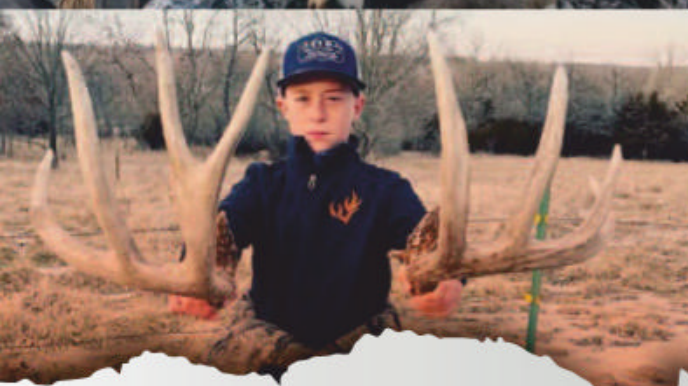
Calcium plays a vital role in the lives of all deer. Males require this mineral for antler growth, one of the most physically demanding processes a male deer must endure. Antlers are considered the fastest growing tissue in the animal kingdom, with growth rates reaching close to a quarter-inch per day—faster than cancerous cells. Given these rapid growth rates, deer face significant nutritional demands during the period of antler growth. Of the resources required for antler growth, calcium, phosphorous, and protein are among the most important. To achieve maximal antler growth rates, deer may need up to 1.0 g of calcium/day, 0.5 g of phosphorous, and a diet consistent of 16% protein/day during the most intensive periods of antler growth.

Females also require large amounts of calcium, phosphorous, and protein for both gestation and lactation. During early gestation, females deposit approximately 2 g of protein/day into the uterus. This

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DANIEL SCHMIDT

AU DEER LAB'S DEER BONE BROTH

This recipe can be customized to your tastes and can be creatively adapted to whatever supplies you may have on hand. For this recipe, we typically use a single femur bone to make 4 quarts of bone broth, but other large bones such as a bone-in shank or shoulder blade would work as well. Don't worry about completely cleaning meat off the bones, any leftover bits will just add to the flavor of the broth. However, it is important to saw or break the bones so the marrow is exposed and can flavor the bone broth. Additionally, any vegetables added into the broth do not need to be peeled or prepared other than simply chopping. So, you can utilize portions of vegetables you might not otherwise consume, such as onion peels, celery tops, or carrot ends. We prefer to use fresh herbs, but dried would also work fine.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 femur bone, sawed in half
- 4 quarts of water
- 1 purple onion, cut into eight chunks
- 2 carrots, cut into 1- to 2-inch segments
- 3 celery stalks, cut into 1- to 2-inch segments
- 1-3 jalapeños, depending on desired spice level
- 2 sprigs of sage
- 4 sprigs of rosemary

- 1 sprig of basil
- ½ head of garlic, crushed
- 2 tbs salt, this can also be adjusted depending on personal preferences
- ½ tbs pepper
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 tbs apple cider vinegar, to aid in the breakdown of flavorful marrow and/or tendons and meat left on the bone

PREPARATION

Add all ingredients to a crock pot
Cook on low heat for 10-12 hours

Note: this recipe can also be adapted for cooking in a pressure cooker, although we get more flavorful results from slow cooking. To pressure cook the bone broth, simply pressure cook on high pressure for 2.5 to 3 hours, and allow for a natural pressure release for at least 30 minutes.

STORAGE IDEAS

Once prepared, this broth can be stored in a multitude of ways, both frozen and refrigerated. Ideas for freezing and storing broth include but are not limited to: pre-portioned amounts stored in freezer-safe bags, canning mason jars, and pre-portioned 1-cup volume ice cube trays.

phosphorus during late gestation. During peak lactation, she may require 8.2 g/day calcium and 7.5 g/day phosphorous.

MEETING THEIR NEEDS

Deer may meet these intense nutritional demands through a variety of physiological processes. Primarily, deer will shift their diets and select for forages with greater levels of necessary nutrients. For example, growing forbs contain greater levels of protein, phosphorous, and potassium, and leaves of woody species contain greater levels of calcium. Deer are concentrate selectors, meaning that they will select for the most nutritious portions of a plant. Research has shown that deer prefer growing tips and buds of plants, as these portions typically have greater nutritional value. Deer will utilize their environment to best meet their needs.

Despite this increased forage selectivity, deer often cannot meet their nutritional needs through herbaceous forage alone. In this case, deer turn to another source of vital nutrition: bone. The skeletal system serves as a valuable reserve for calcium and phosphorous, containing approximately 98% of the calcium and 80% of the phosphorous present in an individual. During time periods when these nutrients are in great demand, deer can utilize their skeletal reserves of both calcium and phosphorous. This process, where bones lose their minerals and become weaker, is known as osteoporosis. Both antler growth in bucks and gestation and lactation in does may require deer to enter into osteoporosis. This can be especially physiologically taxing for deer, and they are left to replenish these depleted skeletal reserves later in the year.

In addition to their own skeletal reserves, deer utilize osteophagy of skeletons and antlers from their environment to meet these nutritional demands. Although the mineral and protein content of antlers can vary depending on available habitat nutrition, antlers can be a source of calcium, phosphorous, and protein.

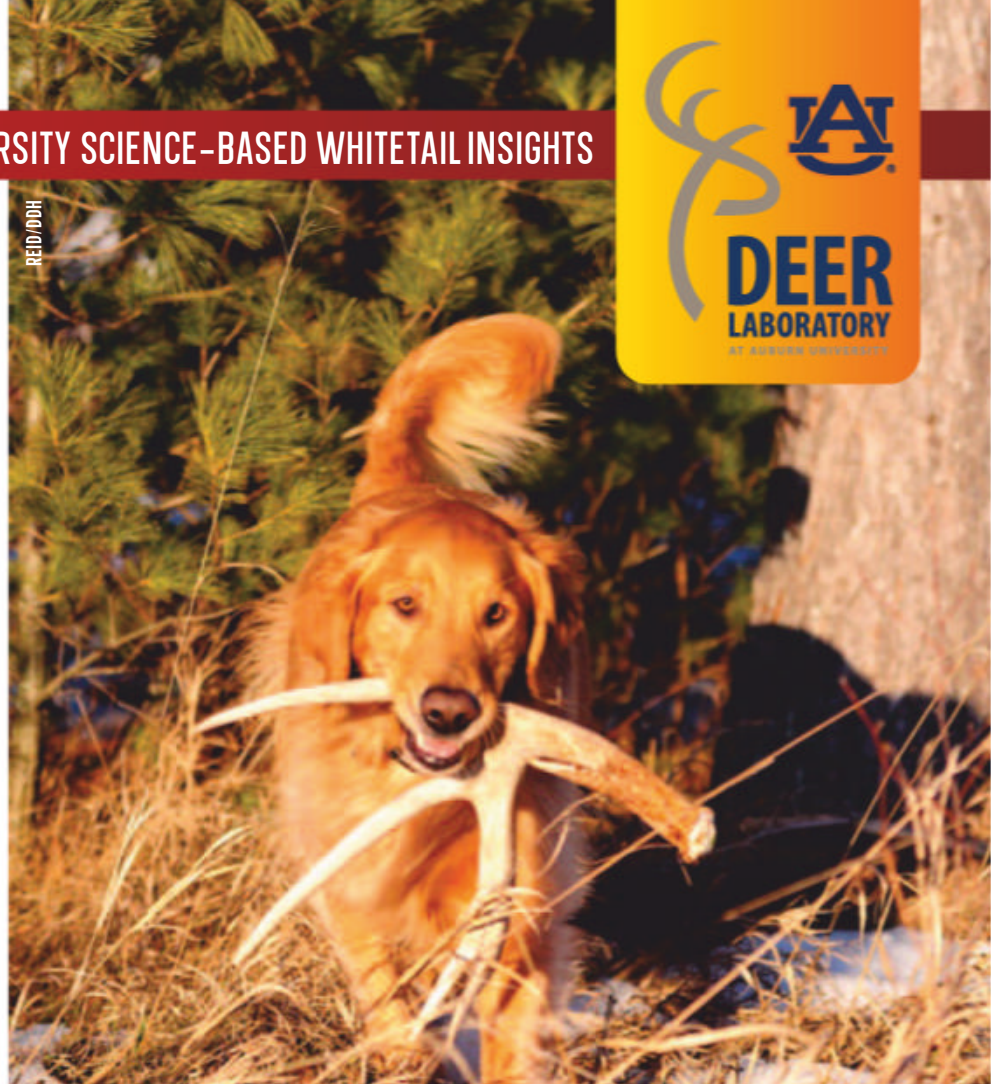
increases to roughly 39 g per day during the third trimester. During the most demanding periods of gestation and peak lactation, does require a diet comprised

of 17-19% protein. Calcium and phosphorous demands are also great during these periods. A doe with twins may require roughly 8.3 g/day of calcium and 8.2 g/day of

Hardened antler is comprised of up to 35-40% protein and 60-65% ash, or total minerals composition. This ash includes up to 24% calcium, 11% phosphorous, 0.5% magnesium, 0.9% sodium, 0.3% sulfur, 35 ppm aluminum, 500 ppm potassium, 37 ppm iron, 30 ppm manganese, and 71 ppm zinc. Depending on the size of a bone and the species the bone belongs to, bones can serve as a significant source of these same minerals. Although the nutritional contents of antler and bone are well documented, it is unclear just how much osteophagy contributes to meeting the needs of antler development, gestation, and lactation. Studies have suggested that saliva and rumen fluid are poor at digesting bones, but the small intestine is extremely efficient at extracting minerals from consumed food. So, while the digestive system of deer and other ruminants did not evolve specifically for dealing bone consumption, they do have the ability to extract much needed minerals from bones. This is further supported by a documented increase in osteophagy when animals experience nutritional stressors. Overall, we can conclude that if there is a need for these nutrients, and bones are available in the environment, herbivores will take advantage of the situation and engage in osteophagy to meet their needs.

While herbivores lack the dental structures that allow many carnivores to successfully break into bones and get the most nutritional value from the collagen, protein, and other vitamins and minerals present in the marrow, they can still gain a lot of nutrients from chewing on them. Many deer species including reindeer, red deer, axis deer, and mule deer have been documented consuming bones and antlers. Researchers in Norway have even observed reindeer chewing on the unshed antlers of other herd members! Among herbivorous animals, osteophagy has also been documented in giraffes, camels, wildebeest, sheep and more. Our canine companions also partake in this behavior. Many of us with shed antlers to spare will give them to our dogs, who are keen to gnaw down on this forest-foraged treat. While your dog chewing on antlers doesn't necessarily mean their diet is nutrient-deficient, it represents a behavior seen across the animal kingdom.

White-tailed deer are an extremely adaptable species, capable of living in both urban and rural areas, tropical latitudes and temperate latitudes, and the myriad of landscape types these environments present. Deer owe their success in part to their ability to adapt to a wide array of environments. Understanding the highly varied diet of white-tailed deer provides us the opportunity to see just how capable they are of meeting their nutritional needs through the consumption of some food sources that we might not expect. In addition to osteophagy, deer have been documented consuming turtle shells, bird eggs, birds, and gut piles left behind by predators (or hunters). While it may be slightly disturbing to imagine a deer consuming all these unexpected things, their opportunistic and highly variable diets are a testament to how adaptable and resilient these animals truly are.



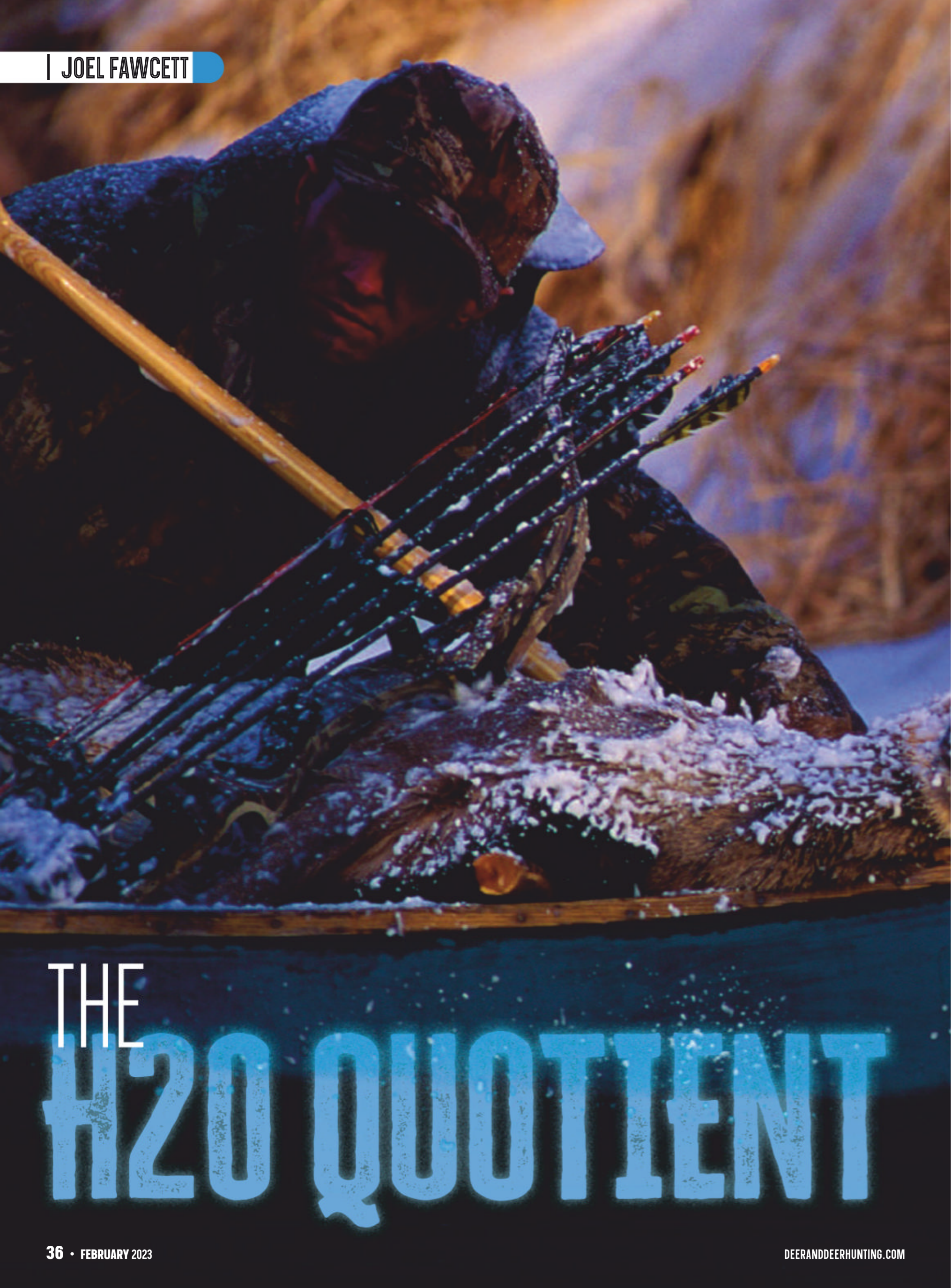
SO, CAN YOU EAT THE HORNS?

While we do not recommend taking your shed antlers and turning them into a snack, nor do we recommend using your teeth to chew on the bones of your next harvested deer, there are other ways we can utilize deer bones to meet our own nutritional demands. We at the AU Deer Lab quite literally eat, sleep, and breathe deer, and have enjoyed our fair share of meals revolving around our own study species.

One of our favorite ways to utilize deer bones that may otherwise have been discarded during the processing of a harvested deer is by making venison bone broth. This is similar to bone broth that you can buy at the store, often made from beef or chicken, and a very easy staple to prepare and keep in your kitchen. This broth can be sipped on its own or served as a base for any recipe that calls for a prepared stock or broth. By first sawing or breaking the bones (we recommend using the long leg bones), then simmering in a pressure cooker, slow cooker, or stovetop, you can extract nutrients such as collagen, protein, calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, and potassium. On the opposite page we have a suggested recipe for venison bone broth that can be tailored to your liking. While you may use this as a guideline, we usually alter the recipe depending on what vegetables and supplies we have in our kitchen, whether that be through using discarded portions of onions, carrots, or celery not usually eaten, or using up the last of the head of garlic in the pantry.

Just as deer meet their nutritional needs by selective foraging or osteophagy based upon what is available to them in their environment, we like to think of the practice of making this venison bone broth as a way for us to do the same.





| JOEL FAWCETT

THE H2O QUOTIENT



One of my most memorable confrontations with whitetails occurred on the shore of Clifford Stream on a cold and frosty Veterans Day morning. It was still dark, but a streak of pink showed on the eastern horizon when I beached my canoe two miles from my remote camp on the shore of Musquash Bay in northeastern Maine.

After securing my watercraft to a shoreline fir, I entered the dense blackgrowth cedar swamp and took up a trail I had previously hacked out of the thickets. A short hike brought me to the first of a chain of knolls that lined the stream. I had never hunted the area before, but I had scouted it thoroughly after the previous hunting season.

At the stream, I picked up an archaic logging trail and began still-hunting. Slowly and surreptitiously, a step at a time, I still-hunted my way along the ancient logging byway — now a heavily used game corridor. I scrutinized the cover in all directions at each step, first from a standing, then kneeling position.

I hadn't progressed far, perhaps a tenth of a mile, when I came to a side-trail funnel heavily marked with buck rubs. The trail cut through the tangle of blackgrowth to a beech/oak ridge on the far side of the swamp. I took a few more steps and came across a freshly worked table-size scrape. It was decorated with a licking branch, a couple of moose-sized deer tracks and a copious pile of large, wet droppings.

"Whoa," I whispered. "I'd sure like to see the buck that..."

With no time to finish the thought, my ears picked up on the snapping and popping of dry sticks. I froze mid-stride and scanned my eyes toward the source of the sound.

There!

It was a buck all right, and he was huge. Keeping an eye on the 8-point crown weaving through the jackpines before me, I released my rifle's safety and slowly raised the gun to the ready position. I

WINDIGO

was almost certain he didn't know I was there, so I waited until the prodigious buck stepped into a clearing. When he did, I quickly placed my sights on his shoulder and squeezed the trigger.

At the shot, the big hombre wheeled around and tore back into the swamp. I immediately thought I would be facing a tough tracking job, but then I heard a tremendous crash. He barely made it 50 yards before piling up.

This was just one of many occasions in my life when hunting a river or stream shoreline has put a supply of venison in the freezer.

Ah, but the day's excitement was just beginning. A short time later, while I was crouched over the burly buck attempting to take self-timer photographs, I was surprised to again hear the sound of cracking branches and hoofbeats coming my way. To my amazement, I was soon eyeball to eyeball with another leviathan buck ... almost a twin of the 247-pound brute I was crouched over.

The second buck approached to within no more than 25 feet of me and the dead buck. Excited and curious, I avoided making eye contact. He didn't budge. In fact, he stood there for what seemed like 10

minutes, until my legs cramped up so bad that I spoke.

"Well, what do you want?" I grumbled.

The jumbo whitetail snorted loudly and departed in such a rush that he nearly tripped over himself.

DON'T HEAD FOR THE HILLS

Here in the Northeast, most deer hunters head for the high country in search of big bucks, but I go in the opposite direction. I've been seeking lowland water sources for my hunting spots for so long, probably because I know I will find few, if any, other hunters there. Having the woods to myself is a benefit that outweighs any of the perceived downsides. The best part, however, is that I know I stand a better chance of finding more and bigger whitetails when I'm hunting amidst the nasty stands of fir, spruce and puckerbrush that surround most of our remote rivers, streams and brooks.

In fact, my experience leads me to believe that northern hunters across the country will find more bragging-size bucks amidst conifer thickets than they will find within five or six square miles of even the best high-ground habitat.

I'm getting a bit long in the tooth

now, but over the past 50 years I've spent the majority of most New England gun-deer seasons still-hunting (I call it "Nimrodding") and guiding other hunters in such waterway haunts. Most of the hunters I've hunted with or guided took one look at what appears to be an impenetrable forest before opting to head for the more open high country.

That has been their loss. Richard Arsenault, the founder and recently retired guru of the Maine Antler & Skull Trophy Club, told me practically all of Maine's record whitetails are taken from lowland locations.

Few hunters realize there's almost always a major game travel corridor — complete with bottlenecks bisecting the heavy cover — that borders most remote waterways. It seems mature bucks almost always take the path of least resistance when traveling from Point A to Point B. That's why these funnels and bottlenecks are prime sites for still-hunting and hunting via the option of a tree stand or ground blind.

Before setting up, it's vital to determine if the bottleneck receives frequent deer use. That's why I do most of my scouting for the next season right after



the gun season ends. These true post-season scouting efforts allow me to determine which trails are preferred and offer clues about how to hunt them.

LIVE ON THE EDGE

The edges of rivers and streams often serve as natural boundaries of deer territories. The sunlight that strikes the open forest along a waterway's shoreline promotes the growth of a heterogeneous diversity of grasses, forbs, shrubs, mast crops and nutritious browse that is not available under the canopy of a mature forest. This makes shorelines very attractive for whitetail does during fawning time. And, when the rut kicks in, bucks are naturally lured to such sites.

There tends to be abundant interaction between bucks and does when streams mark the boundaries between territories. This is why some streamside trails often show an inordinate number of rubs, scrapes and licking branches during the rut. Bucks get very competitive when they have to share territory, and they show off their aggressiveness and virility by repeatedly leaving their markings.

Whenever I find a trail heavily marked with rubs and scrapes, I

know I'm in an area where bucks are aggressive and susceptible to grunt calls, doe bleats and antler rattling. The presence of deer is obviously the key to using such tactics, but so is the fact that waterways are usually surrounded by thick cover. The cover makes deer feel safe and, hence, allows them to be more comfortable to respond to calls because security is only a hop or two away.

That's why I like to still-hunt these corridors. Maybe a gullied and worn side-trail funnel will lead me to a hardwood ridge with a bumper crop of beechnuts or acorns, or perhaps to a bountiful wild cranberry bog, or to a cedar swamp. The opportunities are seemingly endless.

What's more, these funnels receive heavy use by does throughout the season, which makes them dynamite options for hunting the rut. If you can pinpoint a buck funnel between the doe groups, you've got yourself a top-notch site for a tree stand or a ground blind.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Whenever I hunt a backcountry river or stream that's only accessible by watercraft, I'm confident I won't have to share the woods with anyone. In the more than 50 years that I've been hunting northern Maine's lowlands, I've only crossed paths with two other hunters in the woods, and they were both more concerned about how to find their way back home than they were in shooting a big buck.

Thus, the deer in these haunts often exhibit calm and serene behavior, and they follow their natural routines instead of reacting to hunting pressure. This allows you the opportunity to study and interpret deer sign. It also allows you to map out a still-hunting route or a stand location where you will most likely encounter a buck.

My favorite spots to hunt in these settings are at well-worn bank crossings. The best crossings are shallow, possess hard bottoms, and have low banks on both sides of the waterway. Also, on the most heavily used crossings, it's ideal if the crossing is a long hike both up and downstream to the next available crossing.

It's best to hunt a deer crossing when the wind is blowing either straight upstream or downstream. This allows you to position yourself on the downwind side of the crossing, and it greatly reduces the chance that a deer will smell you before it's too late.

One of the most useful pieces of information I've picked up from a career of hunting backcountry waterways is that big bucks often like to bed where they can hear the sound of flowing water. Whenever I've mentioned this to some of my deer hunting friends or guiding clients, most laugh and think it is a bunch of cockamamie.

Despite their skepticism, I've learned the old saw has some merit. In fact, I've found it to be true on so many occasions that whenever I'm hunting and hear the sound of a bubbling brook, I look around for a nearby chunk of high ground that offers cover. You'd be surprised at how often I've discovered frequently used buck beds nearby.

I always mark these areas on my topo maps and return for pre-planned still-hunts. And guess what? I've killed several fine bucks in the ensuing hunts.

SUMMARY

I can count on one hand the number of hunters I've observed who use watercraft to hunt deer, and most of these were sage Northeast guides. The vast majority of today's deer hunters evidently don't like to outboard across a lake or paddle down a river before daybreak on a cold, frosty November morning. That's too bad, because they're missing out on some great opportunities.

If you want to put a monster buck in your sights this fall, be the guy who goes the extra mile down that brush-choked brook, stream or river. Besides enjoying an invigorating hunt, your canoe just might come back several hundred pounds heavier.

— Longtime D&DH contributor
Joel Fawcett was a veteran
deer hunter and outdoor
writer from Maine.



**WANT TO OUTSMART
MORE DEER? LEARN HOW
TO IDENTIFY AND CORRECT
YOUR BIGGEST HANG-UPS.**

Imagine you're in a dream, hunting one of the micromanaged, mature-buck-rich properties many of the TV, video and other outdoors personalities hunt, where bucks are not targeted until they are at least 3½ years old. If you're used to hunting areas with heavy competition, you would be in seventh heaven knowing a mistake before releasing your arrow would not necessarily end an opportunity and would definitely not be a season killer, because you'd get another opportunity at a mature buck.

THE PROGRAM



Now wake up, and face the reality that isn't gonna happen. You simply can't afford it, or maybe like me, you don't have the unusual desire for a guaranteed season. So instead, you go out and compete against the masses of other bowhunters for few mature bucks.

The few mature bucks that might inhabit heavily hunted areas have been conditioned to consequential hunting pressure. That's defined as a situation in which most if not all bow- and gun hunters in the area target every legal antlered buck. This type of pressure has a direct influence on how many bucks survive to reach maturity, their daytime movement habits and how they react to any portion of a hunt. If you're pursuing a particular buck in such areas, one mistake might determine your entire season.

Here's a step-by-step plan to improving your approach.

STEP 1. MASTER SCENT CONTROL

Mistake No. 1 is assuming hunting the wind is good enough. It's an undisputed fact that when bucks are chasing during the rut, they can come from unexpected directions, often putting them downwind. Just considering the wind during your time on stand doesn't take into account the odor left behind on entries and exits.

Many bucks I have taken were downwind of me at some point, as were many deer passing by before them. Your success rates will climb when every deer can pass by unalarmed by your human odor.

Activated carbon is still the most adsorptive substance known, and it's used in chemical warfare suits; thousands of industrial, household and vehicle filtration applications; and, fortunately, hunting suits.

We are constantly emitting many types of gaseous and liquid molecules associated with human body odor, and activated carbon adsorbs all types of those molecules. Anti-microbial garments worn against the skin kill bacteria, aiding in the scent elimination process, but they do nothing in adsorbing odor from dead bacteria or any of the other odor molecules we emit.

A properly cared-for activated-carbon outer suit, gloves and head

cover — worn in conjunction with scent-free rubber boots and a frequently washed fanny or backpack — will keep your human odor so minimal that scent detection will be a thing of the past. I hunted many years without this regimen and many with it, and the difference in detection is not up for discussion.

STEP 2. LEARN HOW TO COMPETE

This topic is rarely mentioned because most nationally recognized hunters do not compete with other hunters. Consequential hunting pressure affects deer movements more than any other factor — period. Not paying attention and reacting to it is a costly mistake.

Whenever scouting or hunting, you should note all pertinent information about the setups of other hunters, including baiting, shooting lanes, concealment cover, tree-stand height, quality of location and whether they're hunting field edges or open areas. You can estimate the competence level of other hunters by checking their locations.

Most often, they will not be much of a threat and will simply act as deer deflectors. However, you must learn their habits and adjust your locations and seasonal and daily timing around them. This might also mean accessing areas where your competition is not willing to go. Doing so might require waders, hip boots, a canoe, a boat or crawling on your hands and knees.

STEP 3. SCOUT LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Although scouting might seem like a trivial part of the hunting process concerning mistakes, it might not be, depending on how and when you do it. Most hunters do their scouting and tree preparation during the pre-season, and mature bucks can't differentiate between scouting and hunting. They simply react to the sudden influx of human activity by turning nocturnal.

During the rut phases, when the testosterone levels of mature bucks increase and they begin moving some during daylight, they abandon their summer bedding-to-feeding-area routines in search of estrous

does, making most pre-season setups rather worthless.

Limit pre-season scouting to setting up a couple of trees for the first few days of the season. Make sure they have confirmed buck sign — such as rubs, large tracks or possibly active scrapes — and get out. Try to do this in one midday trip, and don't come back until the opener.

Because more than half of the Pope & Young entries are taken during the rut phases, most scouting and tree preparation should be done during the post-season while looking at sign left from the previous rut, such as scrape areas, licking branches, converging runways, or rub lines or clusters.

During the post-season, you can scout as often and prepare as many trees as you want without fear of altering fall movement patterns. Also, the trees and surrounding area will look similar to what you'll see during the rut, indicating how much cover your setups will offer at crunch time.

STEP 4. FIND SECONDARY LOCATIONS

Hunting rut-phase locations during the lull — between the first few days of season and the pre rut — is a huge mistake because it will alter doe traffic when mature bucks are primarily nocturnal.

Set up secondary locations where your entries, exits and on-stand time will not affect deer traffic in your rut hunting locations. Realistically, your chances at a mature buck during the lull are slim, but if you must hunt, sit in a tree in your yard, hunt secondary locations or social hunt with a buddy and mess up his area. All buck traffic during the rut phases revolves around doe traffic, so rut-phase locations should be left alone until then.

STEP 5. PREP YOUR TREES EARLY

In pressured areas, mature deer look for hunters in trees, and unlike what you see on TV and videos, they don't stick around and wonder what you are. They spook immediately. This has a direct correlation to tree preparation and stand height. Common mistakes

include setting-up too low, too exposed and in inferior trees.

Early in the season, trees offer foliage and background cover, negating the need to hunt high. By the rut phases, however, most trees have lost their foliage. When setting up a rut-phase tree, go higher in an attempt to get out of a deer's peripheral vision. My preference is 25 feet or higher. This height creates poor shot angles, so it's wise to practice and re-sight from a similar height.

STEP 6. AVOID OPEN AREAS

Hunting short crop-field edges are great if you want to see deer or take subordinate bucks. Unfortunately, if you're pursuing mature bucks, this type of hunting is often a waste of time. Although TV and video hunters commonly take big bucks along short crop fields, remember where they hunt.

For consistent success in pressured areas, you must commit to hunting locations that offer security and transition cover.

STEP 7. RECONSIDER MIDDAY

Most deer movement occurs during mornings and evenings, and that's when most hunters hunt. But mature bucks everywhere have a midday movement pattern during the rut, and it's a mistake not to take advantage of it.

Rut-phase movements in pressured areas will usually go something like this: A buck will stage within cover or move into his bedding area before first light and loiter or bed. If a doe passes, the buck will check her for receptiveness, and if the doe is in estrus, the buck will pursue her. If nothing of interest passes during the morning, using the best available cover, the buck will scent-check his core area during midday — 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. — and take up a chase or bed down until dark.

Unless he's with an estrous doe, a buck will transition through the best available cover while scent-checking his core area, making open areas relatively worthless.

This midday movement during the rut is often a mature buck's only point of vulnerability. Midday

hunting is a boring yet lethal method that's rarely practiced.

STEP 8. UNDERSTAND DAILY TIMING

Morning entry times often constitute a common mistake during the rut or when hunting a mast or fruit tree near or within bedding areas. Deer have usually moved into these areas before daylight, and entering them just before daylight will frequently spook a buck.

During morning rut hunts, and when hunting small feeding destinations within security cover, you should arrive at least an hour and a half before dawn. By doing so, you'll avoid spooking deer with your entry.

In such locations and during the rut, I'm always set up and quiet two hours before first light. These early arrivals are unnecessary during the rest of the season.

STEP 9. TIME YOUR TACTICS

Overuse, improper use or overly aggressive use of tactics such as rattling, calling, scents and decoys are mistakes that will impede success.

Aggressive rattling and calling as seen on TV and videos might work great in lightly hunted areas, but not in pressured areas where deer rarely — if ever — hear those sounds. Keep noise tactics within the realm of believability for the area's herd.

I have taken several mature bucks during the first few days of season with subtle sparring or calling sounds, but my most consistent results have occurred during the rut. Don't overdo it by using noise tactics too frequently. My best results have been early in the morning and just before dark.

I have had bucks alter their routes or become leery when smelling scents that don't fit the area or time of season, both of which can lower your odds of an opportunity. For scents to work with consistency, you must use them in moderation and appropriately during the proper time of the season.

Although I had success in my home state of Michigan with decoys in the early 1990s, I rarely use them in pressured areas anymore.

It's common for does to spook from decoys, and when they do, they rarely keep it a secret, letting every deer within hearing distance know something is not right by snorting and pounding the ground. Because all buck traffic during the rut revolves around doe traffic, you shouldn't use decoys in pressured areas.

Decoys have worked well during my travels to states with low hunter densities. On a 2007 hunt in Iowa, I took a 10-pointer that came within 25 yards to check out a doe decoy.

In heavily hunted areas, most mature bucks likely have previous wounds and have heard or seen every trick in the book, making them very cautious when and if they respond to a tactic. For tactics to work with consistency, your location must offer perimeter and transition security cover.

STEP 10. AVOID TEMPTATIONS

I'm going to ruffle some feathers with this next bit of advice because almost every hunter likes to know what bucks inhabit their areas. Motion cameras are the best way of finding out. However, using motion cameras at your public hunting location can be detrimental to success.

For those of you hunting pressured areas, think about it. A camera must be set up and checked periodically, requiring several visits. In pressured areas, every visit is detrimental to that location's potential. When using cameras, set them up in areas away from your hunting locations, not at them.

By far, the best pictures are those with you holding onto a set of antlers attached to your buck.

— *For instructional videos on how John Eberhart prepares his stand sites and hunts pressured deer on public land, visit his YouTube channel: Eberhart Outdoors.*



FLOATER BUCKS



Deer research continues to produce new, interesting and sometimes controversial findings. For example, application of new techniques and larger study sample sizes have generated evidence that challenges long-held beliefs regarding white-tailed deer reproductive behavior. Anyone who thinks they are completely versed in whitetail breeding-related behavior had better not become too entrenched in their way of thinking.

As I discussed in the September 2010 issue of *Deer & Deer Hunting*, a recent study using GPS radio-collars indicates estrous females do not necessarily employ a passive, energy-conserving — sit-and-wait — mating strategy, as formerly believed. Apparently, estrous females commonly leave their home range for a brief period in search of the best possible mate.



STEVE PENNOYER/WINDIGO

Likewise, researchers have apparently overestimated the importance of male dominance in the whitetail's mating system.

Based largely upon observational data, we thought whitetails formed a strict breeding dominance hierarchy where a few of the most dominant bucks bred nearly all estrous does. Application of new genetic techniques that employ DNA analysis indicate this is not the case. Instead, the job of siring offspring is shared by most bucks 2½ years old and older. And even in the presence of mature bucks, some yearlings manage to mate and sire offspring.

In fact, DNA analysis indicates that multiple paternity (the fathering of individuals within a litter by more than one male) may occur in 20 percent to 25 percent of whitetail twins and triplets.

Most recently, researchers from Texas and Georgia, led by Mickey Hellickson, examined year-round changes in buck movements to determine if home range and core area sizes differed by adult buck age-class. Based on previous data, the researchers expected to find the largest annual and seasonal range sizes in young (subdominant) and mature (dominant) bucks — according to the subdominant-dominant-floater model. Although that was sometimes the case, age-related differences were relatively minor and seldom significant.

THE FLOATER MODEL

Based upon research conducted in 1969 and 1970, on the Welder Wildlife Refuge in southern Texas, Bennett Brown observed four bucks' behavioral patterns corresponding to degree of maturation. Each of these were associated with a particular type of social behavior, as follows:

1. Immature bucks associated closely with their mothers and siblings and formed part of the family groups. As a result, their home ranges were the same as their mothers and relatively small.

2. Young adult bucks separated from the family group. They became subdominant floaters and associated with various social groups. Hence, they held little attachment to any particular area (i.e., lacked site fidelity) and traveled widely.

3. Middle-aged bucks formed true social bonds and stable all-male (fraternal) groups. They occupied small home ranges and displayed a high degree of site fidelity.

4. Large mature bucks became independent and did not form strong social bonds with other males. Instead, they traveled freely over large home ranges as dominant floaters, especially during the breeding season.

"Prior to the rut, the dominance relationships are extended beyond male groups in push fighting, which occurs then. This extension seems to result in a reduction of the frequency of overt fighting behavior, which occurs during the breeding season," Brown said. In other words, Brown considered buck social organization highly adaptive because it conserved energy and minimized risk of fighting-related injury.

THE HELICKSON GROUP STUDY

Because Brown's study was primarily observational and limited in sample size (i.e., 9 radio-collared deer), Hellickson and his group questioned the widespread application of these early findings. As a result, using a large radiotelemetry dataset, their objective was to re-examine Brown's proposed buck social organization model — questioning the presence of "floaters," in particular.

From January 1993 to June 1995 in South Texas, Hellickson's group used more than 16,000 radio locations for 96 bucks of all ages to calculate annual and seasonal changes in home range and core area size for bucks grouped by four age categories:

- 1. Young: 1 to 2 years old.**
- 2. Middle: 3 to 4 years old.**
- 3. Mature: 5 to 6 years old; and**
- 4. Old: 7 or more years old.**

The researchers employed a standard system where 95 percent of all radio locations for each buck were used to delineate its home range and 50 percent of all locations were used to delineate individual core areas.

Estimates of home range and core areas were generated for:

Summer: June 1 to Sept. 30.

Pre-rut: Oct. 1 to Nov. 30.

Rut: Dec. 1 to Jan. 10.

Post-rut: Jan. 11 to March 31.

Spring: April 1 to May 31, and

Annually: July to June.

Given this approach, the researchers also were able to determine if bucks shifted the location of their home range or core areas annually or seasonally.

ANNUAL CHANGES

Annual size of home ranges and core areas for four buck age categories are shown in Table 1. Generally, young (2-year-old) bucks maintained the largest annual home ranges (3.6 square miles), and old bucks (7 or more years old) had the smallest (1.7 square miles). These range estimates compare favorably to home range sizes reported for Southern deer (2.7 to 5.8 square miles), but at the low end.

All bucks exhibited relatively high annual home range fidelity (61 percent or more). That is, they essentially used the same home range each year with minor shifts in boundaries. Interestingly, old bucks showed greater attachment to their established annual home ranges, compared to middle-aged bucks (3-to 4-year-olds). This trend suggests that bucks become more attached to a given home range as they mature.

The same general pattern held true for annual core area size. Young bucks exhibited the largest annual core areas (356 acres), and old bucks had the smallest (151 acres). However, the opposite was true regarding differences in annual core boundaries; old bucks were most likely to shift core area boundaries from one year to the next.

Given these observations, Hellickson's group offered the following: "We suggest that as males mature past prime breeding age, they are less likely to explore and use new areas, becoming more fixed in their use of space among years. Furthermore, we surmise that older-aged deer display increased flexibility in their core areas of activity; perhaps because they are relegated to alternate areas within their home range by younger, more active deer."

SEASONAL HOME RANGES

Data concerning age-related differences in seasonal home range and core area sizes are shown for spring, pre-rut, and rut in Table 2. Overall, young bucks generally exhibited the largest seasonal home ranges and core areas, whereas old bucks had the smallest.

All bucks maintained smaller home ranges during spring than during other seasons — a phenomenon commonly observed throughout the whitetail's range. Researchers have proposed that this is attributable to social behavior related to fawning or to seasonal increases in forage availability that exceeds basic metabolic needs.

In South Texas, the most plausible reason for the reduction in springtime movements appears to be nutrition-related, because peak fawning occurs in summer rather than spring.

As reported in other studies, whitetails in South Texas demonstrated greater attachment to their summer home ranges than they did during other seasons. Hellickson's group suggests this trend is a "strategy to avoid nutritional and thermoregulatory stress associated with dry summers."

Hence, they suggest the following: "By using traditional areas with a high diversity of woody browse species, males may be better suited to cope with uncertain resources. Alternatively, greater fidelity to home range during summer could be a function of reduced aggression and increased aggregation thereby facilitating more traditional use of space."

During the rut, bucks did not expand their home ranges or core areas in search of receptive females — an unexpected finding. Furthermore, bucks reduced their activity rates and apparently remained relatively sedentary during the breeding season.

Because young and mature bucks maintained larger seasonal home ranges than old bucks, the authors conclude there is some evidence in support for Brown's model. That is, young (subdominant) bucks and mature (dominant) bucks seemed to behave as predicted.

SEASONAL CORE AREAS

As with home range size, all bucks maintained their smallest seasonal core areas (89 to 143 acres) during spring. Except during pre-rut, young bucks typically maintained larger core areas (143 to 413 acres) than other bucks, whereas old-age bucks generally maintained the smallest seasonal core areas (89 to 171 acres).

Regardless of their age, bucks did not expand their core areas during the rut. However, all bucks tended to shift their rut-season core areas of activity from one year to the next. The researchers theorize this is because of annual variations in the location of receptive does, which causes bucks to relocate their core areas of activity accordingly — a trait hunters might carefully consider.

CONCLUSIONS

As predicted by Brown's buck social organization model, young bucks (1 to 2 years old) in this study functioned as floaters. Compared to bucks 3 to 6 years of age, younger individuals lacked social bonds, traveled larger ranges throughout the year, and were more likely to shift home range and core area boundaries seasonally.

Contrary to expectations, however, dominant bucks (5 to 6 years old) did not behave as floaters. Instead, they retained social (fraternal) habits during much of the year, became increasingly attached to their established ranges, and did not noticeably expand their range during the rut. In fact, mature bucks were surprisingly sedentary during the rut.

This doesn't necessarily mean dominant floaters don't exist, but it certainly suggests they are uncommon.

Although the investigators did not dwell on the point, I found it

interesting that bucks 7 years of age and older adopted a hermit-type behavior by maintaining the smallest annual and seasonal ranges. Although they tended to shift their rut-season core areas of activity annually, old bucks were more sedentary than other bucks. The researchers speculate this occurred because old bucks lost dominance status.

Keep in mind, this study was conducted in South Texas, in a very unique environment where whitetails tend to behave accordingly — in a unique fashion. How these findings relate elsewhere is unknown.

I find it difficult to believe that mature Northern bucks do not expand their range during the height of the rut, especially where low deer populations prevail and deer tend to migrate seasonally. We will never know for sure, of course, until free-ranging, age-structured buck populations elsewhere are intensively investigated with a similar method — an unlikely prospect in the immediate future, given current heavy buck harvest management strategies.

— Research Editor John Ozoga is a retired deer research biologist from Michigan. He has been a D&DH contributor for more than 20 years.

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MULE DEER **WHITETAIL DEER** **ANTELOPE**

7 STEPS TO LATE-SEASON SUCCESS

**JUST BECAUSE THE RUT IS OVER DOESN'T
MEAN YOU HAVE TO EAT THOSE TAGS.
LAYER UP AND LET'S GO GET 'EM!**

Well, it happened again. At the end of last season you swore you wouldn't let the rut go by another season without turning an arrow loose at a good buck, but here you sit, tag in hand, the rut over, and not sure what to do about it.

Maybe you just didn't get lucky during the rut. Maybe you did, but your arrow hit a twig and soared over a buck's back like an errant SAM missile. Don't give up just yet. Post-rut, late-season bow-hunting can be just as good as the rut. Maybe even better.

Now, before you send all those mean e-mails telling me I don't know what I am talking about, hear me out. Sure the rut is magical, a time when literally thousands of huge bucks are shot. No way am I not up a tree all day, every day, for weeks during the rut. However, even then, success is often just a matter of blind luck ... of a buck wandering mindlessly well outside his core area and within 30 steps of your stand.



LATE-SEASON CHANGES

Winter is one of the most stressful periods for mature bucks of the central and northern United States, as well as Canada. Not only have they beaten themselves up running, fighting and breeding does, they now must try to survive what's commonly a cold winter. To make matters worse, it's not uncommon for bucks to have lost as much as 30 percent of their body weight during the rut, and food sources are entering their seasonal low point.

Luckily, bucks call upon several behavioral and physiological adaptations to aid in their survival. Perhaps no one is better qualified to address these adaptations than D&DH's own John Ozoga.

"Certainly, winter can be a very stressful time of year for the whitetail in northern latitudes," John told me. "To increase their chances of survival, they modify their behavior. This modification is based on the conservation of critical energy and for protection from predators.

Accomplishing this generally requires a shift in habitat. This habitat selection is at least partially based on the severity of the winter weather. In milder winters, they may not relocate as far and base selection more heavily upon food sources. Whereas, during more harsh winters, they tend to select areas that offer more thermal protection, even at the cost of a good food source." The adaptations are not limited to habitat selection. "Congregating in groups also serves as a beneficial adaptation, as does the beaten-down trails created in yarding areas," Ozoga continued. Both the group dynamic and trail system aids in predator detection and avoidance. The increased number of eyes makes predators easier to detect and the trail system provides them with escape routes through the heavy snows.

— Steve Bartylla

And I love it when that happens! But it is hard to pattern anything during the whirlwind that is the rut, and that can be disconcerting, too. You might have been all over a big deer since summer when, POOF!, the rut kicks in and he disappears, possibly into the sights of some other dude across the fence who never knew he existed.

But, say he survives. Now the game is back on. There are patterns to sniff out, new consistencies that make it possible for the hard-working bow-hunter to get on those big guys and close the deal. And there several things in your favor now. If you know what they are and how to use them to your

advantage, you could go from zero to hero in a flash.

Here are seven things you must know to maximize your chances at getting a shot during the late season.

1. BE A WEATHERMAN

I hate being cold. But when a big cold front comes through during December and January, it's time to be on stand. That's because the cold weather increases a buck's already ravenous appetite that was kicked into high gear by the massive amounts of energy expended during the rut and the need to replace those calories to allow winter survival.

During cold weather deer move less because bitter temperatures cause them to lose body heat. However, when prolonged cold weather keeps deer from feeding regularly or when low food sources and cold weather cause them to lose calories and weight, they are forced to move and locate food. They often move during the warmest part of the day, usually in

the late afternoon or early evening, especially if there is cloud cover that can keep heat from dissipating.

In Northern states, when the temperature, dew point or wind chill drop below 20 degrees, deer movement is often restricted to heavy cover, downwind sides of hills, low-lying or other protected areas where deer can escape wind chills.

2. MUCH LOOKING, LITTLE HUNTING

At this time of year, I revert back to an approach much like the one I was using in early October — much looking, a little hunting. That means covering a lot of ground searching for the concentrations of does, which typically shows me the main food source in the area. By making a quick, yet thorough, foot scout of the area, I'll learn the lay of the land. This accomplished, I'll watch the food source from a distance for a couple of days while trying to glean more important information about the deer herd in general.



I might try to slip into a high-traffic location during midday and attempt to pull off a productive hunt, but I'll always err on the side of caution.

At this stage of the season, mature bucks are usually living fairly solitary lifestyles, with little daytime movement. Because there are few, if any, does in estrus, your best rut stands are often very lonely. Now, from early December on into January, it is better to base your approach to success on mature bucks around a well planned ambush between food and bed — never an easy thing to do — or near a high-calorie food source.

3. FEED ME

High-calorie food sources are the key to happiness during late seasons. If there is a corn field around — standing corn is best, but cut corn is fine if there are lots of waste kernels on the ground — I start there. I generally begin with a quick midday scout of the area. If there is snow or mud on the



ground, the sign is clear and there will often be a large number of deer hammering the field. Hopefully, some of the tracks are very large. I cautiously skirt the field edge, hoping to locate a couple of spots where most of the deer are entering and/or exiting the field. A short while later, stands are up.

Then, I back off and watch the field from a distance from mid-afternoon until dark. Often, you'll see lots of deer movement well before dark. The next morning I glass the field at first light, and am not surprised if I see little movement right away, since in bitter weather deer often stay toasty warm in their beds until the sun gains some elevation and warms things up.

Many times I have seen deer come up to a corn or soybean field, stop and look around for a long period of time and then walk straight out to the center of the field without pausing for a second, giving a bow-hunter no shot whatsoever. However, if I do happen to see a mature buck step into the field several evenings in a row, I hang a stand right there. Also, if the mature bucks are entering the

field late in the evening, I will try and find a spot back in the woods a ways for a stand. You know the drill from there.

4. GIMME SHELTER

In Northern states when the temperature stays well below freezing, bow-hunting close to heavy thickets of pine, cedar or hemlock can produce big time. Temperatures inside a thick shelter belt might be 10 to 15 degrees warmer than the open fields. During late archery season, deer will often change their habits and move to thermal covers during a cold spell. In strong winds, they'll bed on the lee sides of hills or in thick stands of trees trying to avoid wind chill.

Whenever possible, set stands in a pine tree, which will give you better cover than leafless trees. If you do not have a pine tree for choice of tree-stand hunting, then consider hunting on the ground with a well built, hidden ground blind.

5. LAYER UP

Here's a no-brainer — it should go without saying that in



bitter weather you need to dress warmly. To maximize your ability to stay warm, layer your clothing beginning with underwear made from a wicking material.

Keeping any moisture — sweat — off your body makes a huge difference in your comfort level. Then add layers as needed, making sure the tops all have zippers so you can vent yourself as needed. Critical areas include hands, head and neck, and feet. I use so many disposable chemical hand warmers this time of year I should buy stock in the companies that make them!

This is also when clothing with a breathable windproof membrane like W.L. Gore's Windstopper will pay huge dividends. I find that wearing this type of clothing allows me to wear one or two layers less than if I do not, which equates to more comfort and mobility on stand. Even my boots with 800- to 1,200-gram Thinsulate insulation have a Gore-Tex membrane, as much for its breathability, that allows sweat to wick off my feet and out through the membrane, as for its waterproof properties.

6. SCENT CONTROL

Why is it that during the late season many bow-hunters forget about following the same meticulous scent control program they use during earlier seasons? Is it because they think in cold weather they won't sweat as much, and thus, not stink as much?

Rubbish.

Make sure you do not skip any steps in your scent control program just because it is bitter cold outside. This includes taking great pains to access/egress stand sites without leaving a smelly people trail as you walk.

7. MODIFY SHOOTING FORM

You must also practice shooting your bow with all these clothes on, remembering that little things can make a big difference. For example, if you wear hats with thick ear flaps and anchor behind your ear, unless you move the flap when you anchor you'll end up shooting to the side.

Wear a full-length arm guard to keep the string off your sleeve. The same can be accomplished with a chest protector or some sort



of "binocular bra" that holds your optics tight to your chest.

When bow-hunting in cold weather, I like to pull my bow back every now and then while on my stand. About every hour or so you should pull your bow back to stretch your muscles and help keep your bow from making too many noises. Many times your bow will ice up, especially during times of snow or freezing rain.

Be sure to check your bow for any squeaks or squeals when drawing and releasing. Arrows are notorious for squealing like a stuck hog when drawn back over icy rest launchers. Padding them with moleskin helps. In super cold weather, a very light coating of PAM cooking oil on then shaft will keep it from screeching and not affect arrow flight.

CONCLUSION

It's certainly not the rut. It's colder than the proverbial well-digger's behind. Yet, the late season can be a great time to take a good deer. You just have to follow the basics of locating them, hunting smart, staying warm, and never giving up. As an added bonus, you often have the woods to yourself.

It's become one of my favorite times of the season to be hunting hard. Once you figure it out for yourself, you'll see why.

— *Bob Robb is one of North America's most successful bow-hunters.*



DIABETES, SORE FEET &

Enjoyable Hunting

I like to walk and stand when I hunt. This change of pace can be good and bad. Good because if I move slowly and stand enough, I have a good chance of staying reasonably warm and a good chance of seeing game animals before they see me.

The potentially bad part? I have Type II diabetes, as do more and more people. Diabetic feet lose their sensitivity, are no fun in any weather, and in cold weather may cause serious problems – frostbite or freezing without knowing it. What we don't feel can seriously hurt us, taking away most or all of the enjoyment of being active outdoors in cold weather.

There's also a thing called pre-diabetes. That means our body is getting ready to have full-blown diabetes, **sometimes as much as 15 years before we actually get diabetes.**

How widespread is diabetes? This information is from the 2020 National Diabetes Statistics Report, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among the U.S. population, crude estimates for 2018 (latest figures available) were:

- **34.2 million** people of all ages, or 10.5 percent of the U.S. population, had diabetes.
- **34.1 million** adults aged 18 years or older (13.0 percent of the U.S. population) had diabetes.
- **7.3 million** adults aged 18 years or older who met laboratory criteria for diabetes were not aware of or did not report having diabetes. This number represents 2.8 percent of all U.S. adults and 21.4 percent of all U.S. adults with diabetes.
- **The percentage** of adults with diabetes increases with age, reaching 26.8 percent -- more than one-quarter of people -- aged 65 years or older. Type II usually starts

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in middle-aged or elderly adults but is increasingly seen in children and young adults.

- **Here are** some 2020 hunter numbers from the National Shooting Sports Foundation:
- **There were** 19,621,000 hunters, of whom 77.3 percent were male and 22.7 percent female.
- **Of all** hunters, 14.5 percent were age 7-17, 72.4 percent were ages 18-64 and 13.2 percent were age 65 or older (All those 18 or older totaled 85.6 percent.)

Since 15.2 of all adults 18 years or older had diabetes or who met laboratory criteria for diabetes or were not aware of or did not report having diabetes, the comparative 15.2 percent of all hunters is 2,982,392. That means nearly three million hunters have pre-diabetes or actual diabetes. That is a bunch. We would like to think that hunters, and other outdoor people, are less likely to have diabetes than the general population because they're more active, but if a study has been done on this, I'm not aware of it.

Out of all the different types of diabetes, Type 2 is by far the most common. Type 2 diabetes symptoms can include excessive hunger and thirst, frequent urination, faintness, fatigue, irritability, and even blurred vision. There is no cure for type 2 diabetes, but it can be managed through careful lifestyle choices. Diabetics must follow a diet that is low in refined carbohydrates and should carefully count all the carbs they consume. Exercise and a healthy weight, as well as a healthy diet, are crucial in preventing diabetes. If diabetes happens to you, it helps to know what you will face and what to do if you want to stay active outdoors. There is no 100% effective way to prevent diabetes.

Type II diabetes is more common in people who are overweight or obese, although certain people are genetically more inclined to develop diabetes than others. It tends to develop gradually, over months or years.

(There's also Type I diabetes, which usually develops quickly over days or weeks, as your pancreas quits making insulin. Type 1 usually shows up in childhood.)

If you're managing diabetes, you may have problems with your feet and legs. Diabetes puts you at higher risk for calluses, corns, bunions, blisters, and ulcers — and high blood sugar means these minor injuries and alterations may become gateways to potentially disabling infections.

However, you can take several steps to help keep your feet in good shape, including wearing specialized footwear, having regular foot exams, and performing low-impact exercise. Diabetes isn't fun, but it's livable if you take care of yourself.

Why is foot care important? Over time, diabetes can cause nerve damage that causes you to lose feeling in your feet. You may not feel a pebble inside your sock or a blister on your foot, which can lead to cuts and sores, with serious consequences, such as the loss of a toe, foot, or leg. Diabetes also can lower the amount of blood flow in your feet. Numbness and less blood flow can make it harder to heal an injury or resist infection.

Plan to take care of your feet for a lifetime. The idea that you need special foods if you have diabetes is a myth. Eat a diet low in fat, salt and sugar and high in fiber, with plenty of fruits and vegetables.

THINGS TO LEARN

I had some things to learn about taking care of diabetic feet in cold weather, or colder-than-cold weather. At first,

I thought things weren't too bad. My feet weren't getting as cold as they once did. Then I came to my senses — “my feet might freeze!” I couldn't feel my feet, which is why they weren't getting cold. That's when I began experimenting with socks and footwear to find what worked best.

I had extra factors to consider. My feet are 6E width. I also have no arch, a high instep, thick ankles, short toes, and calves the size of tree trunks. I always had difficulty buying shoes and boots until I got with a mail-order company that specialized in wide shoes/boots. But they don't have winter boots, so I have had to do a lot of searching to find winter boots that fit.

I also had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) five years ago, a rare autoimmune disorder in which a person's own immune system damages the nerves, the results of which have my right hand feeling frozen at any outside temperature below 65 degrees F.

My major problems have stopped since I learned how to take care of my feet, wore the right socks, kept feet moisturized but warm and dry, and began wearing the best style of socks and boots for me. Another tip: if you have diabetes, don't let your feet get wet in snow or rain.

There are ways to cope and remain outdoors comfortably in cold, cold weather. Not everyone has the same degree of diabetes, or the same level or type of discomfort, pain or tolerance level. Not everyone likes to hunt in the same style; some move fairly frequently and some can sit all day. Reactions and solutions, therefore, will be personal and will vary one to another.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO CONSIDER:

- **Be aware** that your feet are most likely not the same size. Few people have feet of identical size. Try socks and shoes on both feet, not just one.
- **What is** the shape of each of your feet? You need to know to get the best fit on socks but especially on shoes.
- **Don't freeze** your feet. The biggie is peripheral neuropathy, a numbness or tingling in your feet. Tingly feet can be a sign of nerve loss. The nerves in the feet come from the lower back. Pressure or chemical change in the nerve can cause a tingling sensation in the feet.
- **Diabetic neuropathy** is nerve damage caused by diabetes. When it affects the arms, hands, legs and feet, it is known as diabetic peripheral neuropathy. Neuropathy occurs in about 70 percent of people with diabetes.
- **Cushion your** feet. Keep them dry. Minimize foot friction against socks and boots, avoiding blisters. Wear form-fitting socks with reinforced heels and toes and seamless toes and bottoms (not tube socks, which can bunch up, and no compression socks, which are a bad thing for diabetic feet). Seamless toes on socks prevent blisters because they don't bunch up or crease under the ball of your foot.
- **Do NOT** wear cotton socks (or underwear) in the winter. Cotton retains moisture. Wear “wicking” socks that pull moisture off your feet; wool or alpaca or synthetic material is best. Wool stays warm when it is wet. If your feet sweat a lot, change socks at mid-day. Battery operated “heating” socks exist; you may want to check them out. Socks should not be tight but have no slackness anywhere.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR FEET IF YOU HAVE – OR SUSPECT YOU HAVE – DIABETES

You must realize it can take 10–15 years of pre-diabetes in your body before actual diabetes shows up. You can and should begin early to avoid it or minimize it. But when it does show up, the main aims of treatment are:

- **KEEP YOUR** blood glucose level as near normal as possible. After we eat, carbohydrates break down into glucose, a sugar that is the body's primary source of energy. Glucose then enters the bloodstream. The pancreas responds by producing insulin, which allows glucose to enter the body's cells to provide energy. You want to regulate blood sugar levels. Other starchy carbohydrate foods such as potato, rice or breakfast cereals break down into surprising amounts of glucose, too.
- **REDUCE ANY** other risk factors that may increase your risk of developing complications -- stop smoking, lose weight if needed, lower your blood pressure if needed, and keep your blood lipids (cholesterol and triglyceride) low.

Foot care is very important for all people with diabetes, but even more so if you have pain or loss of feeling in your feet (numbness, tingling), changes in the shape of your feet or toes, sores, cuts, or ulcers on your feet that do not heal). To avoid serious foot problems that could result in losing a toe, foot or leg, follow these guidelines.

TAKE CARE of your diabetes. Make plans now to take care of your feet for a lifetime. Work with your health care team to keep your blood glucose in your target range. Check levels of blood glucose, A1C and cholesterol regularly. If things get complicated, see an endocrinologist, not a general practitioner.

WEAR SHOES and socks AT ALL TIMES. Wear clean, dry socks. Buy soft, lightly padded, seamless socks that fit well. Change socks daily. Don't wear cotton in cold weather; cotton holds moisture. Consider socks made specifically for patients living with diabetes. These socks have extra cushioning, do not have elastic tops, are higher than the ankle and are made from fibers that wick moisture away from the skin. Wear socks to bed if your feet get cold at night.

Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet. Check inside your shoes before wearing them. Make sure the lining is smooth and there are no objects inside. Place slippers beside your bed to wear when you get out of bed. Wear the right type of shoes. Walking shoes and athletic shoes are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to "breathe." Never wear vinyl or plastic shoes; they do not stretch or "breathe." When buying shoes, make sure they feel good and have enough room for your toes. For women, do not wear shoes with pointed toes or high heels often. They put too much pressure on your toes. Buy shoes at the end of the day when your feet are the largest; you can find the best fit then.

ASK YOUR doctor about special shoes that can give your feet more room.

When you get new shoes, break them in slowly. Wear them one or two hours a day for the first one or two weeks. Then change your new, broken-in shoes after five hours during the day to change the pressure points on your feet.

CHECK YOUR feet every day. Look for red spots, cuts, swelling, and blisters. If you cannot see the bottoms of your feet, use a mirror or ask someone for help. Inspect the tops, sides, soles, heels, and between your toes. Look for dry and cracked skin, blisters or sores, bruises or cuts, redness, warmth, or tenderness, firm or hard spots. DO NOT use medicated pads or try to shave or cut corns and calluses at home. Most people with diabetes should have corns or calluses treated by a foot doctor.

WASH YOUR feet every day in lukewarm water, not hot. Be gentle. Dry them carefully, especially between the toes. Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry to prevent

infection. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry.

KEEP YOUR skin soft and smooth. Rub a thin coat of lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet. Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.

KEEP YOUR feet dry. Consider using an antiperspirant on the soles of your feet. This is helpful if you have excessive sweating of the feet. Call your doctor if your feet have redness, increased warmth, or swelling, sores or cracks, tingling or burning feeling, pain.

BE MORE active. Regular physical activity also reduces the risk of some complications, such as heart and blood vessel disease. A minimum of 30 minutes of brisk walking at least five times a week is advised. Bike riding is good exercise. Plan your physical activity program with your health team.

MEDICARE AND other insurance for special footwear: You may need special shoes or shoe inserts to support your feet. Medicare Part B insurance may cover some of the cost of special shoes or inserts. Ask your doctor how you can get this special footwear if your insurance plan will pay for Depth shoes or inserts. Depth shoes look like walking shoes but have more room in them. The extra room is for different shaped feet and toes, or for inserts made to fit your feet. They are custom molded shoes with inserts.

IF YOU can see and reach your toenails, trim them when needed. Soak your feet in lukewarm water to soften your toenails before trimming. Trim your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file. Make sure the edge of each nail does not press into the skin of the next toe.

PROTECT YOUR feet from hot and cold. Never walk barefoot. Do not wear flip-flop sandals. Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement. Test water heat and don't put your feet into hot water. Never use hot water bottles, heating pads, or electric blankets. You can burn or hurt your feet without realizing it.

KEEP THE blood flowing to your feet. Put your feet up when sitting. Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for five minutes, two or three times a day. Don't cross your legs for long periods of time. Do not wear tight socks, elastic or rubber bands around your legs.

DON'T SMOKE. Smoking decreases blood flow to your feet. Call 1-800-784-8669 to get help with quitting.

GET PERIODIC foot exams. Seeing your podiatrist on a regular basis can help prevent the foot complications of diabetes.

GET STARTED now. Make your own plan for taking care of your feet. Talk to your doctor or a podiatrist for details NOW, especially if you are overweight, smoke, or don't get enough exercise, or if a cut, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after a few days. Foot ulcers are a common reason for hospital stays for people with diabetes. Detect complications as early as possible -- blood (kidney functions), urine (protein), feet (foot ulcers), sensation in your legs (early nerve damage). Diabetes can cause other problems, especially repeated infections, which may take longer to get better or be harder to treat, hardening of the arteries, eye retina problems, kidney damage, nerve damage, male and female sexual difficulties.

There's more to caring for diabetes than we can put in here. Remember, diabetes can take up to 15 years 'working' in your system before it can be diagnosed. You may already have it but not know it.

Get info on diabetes care from the **AMERICAN DIABETIC ASSOCIATION** or the **NATIONAL DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM 1-800-860-8747 • WWW.NDEP.NIH.GOV.**

- **One thing** I do to minimize foot heat loss is to wear two pairs of thick, well-fitting socks, then slip a one-gallon plastic bag over each foot, then well insulated pull-on boots. It may be my imagination, but I believe the plastic bags hold the heat in and keep my feet warmer. (They also keep boot insulation dry, another benefit.) Retained moisture isn't a problem because my feet

don't perspire like they once did. I also stuff my pants cuffs inside my boots, which minimizes heat loss.

- **The old** 'Korean' Armed Forces boots were great, but they were heavy. If your feet perspired a lot, your feet felt like they were in warm bath water. Modern versions of those boots are available. Some Army/Navy surplus stores may still have old ones, if Army/Navy surplus stores still exist.



WINN160

- **“Modern” pull-on** boots can be great, too, especially when they have thick enough foam insulation. Mine do.
- **Hand and foot** warmers – Put fresh ones between sock layers so you don’t burn your skin. Units that are close to expiration date will get warm but not too hot. If you have tingly feet, learn to distinguish between cold feet tingling and diabetic tingling.
- **Keep hat** and gloves/mitts on, and kidneys warm. Warm extremities and core warmth are important for everyone. We lose 47%-48% of our body heat from our head and neck, so wear a warm cap and keep your neck covered. Keep your hands covered, too, with mitts instead of gloves, because mitts have one pocket instead of individual finger stalls. For kidneys, get an insulated seat with straps for carrying. Snap it around your waist, with the seat at your back. This helps keep your kidneys warm and is comfortable when you’re leaning against a tree.
- **Foam pieces** to stand or sit on over snow or bare ground? Soft foam pieces roughly 14”x20” are great to stand on or sit on, or both. Commercially made foam seats are 1”-1.25” thick. Denser, stiffer (but highly flexible) packing foam is about 3/32” thick. Roll it up and put it in a big jacket pocket or pack, with a rubber band around it to hold it tight. Both foam types are great insulation. They also keep your butt dry when you are seated on a snow-covered log or stump.
- **Snow is** a good insulator until you stand on it and pack it down. But don’t scrape it away. Bare ground is not an insulator; heat goes right out the bottoms of your feet into that cold, cold ground.
- **Be aware** of insulative benefits of layers of newspapers. Remember how warm you were when falling asleep on a sofa while reading a newspaper, with the newspaper spread out over your torso? My first hunting footwear was two pairs of wool socks (one thin and one thick) pulled up over longjohns, several spreads of newspapers with my foot placed in the middle and thick rubber bands slipped over them to hold them in place when pulled up over my legs, then Dad’s zippered dress boots. I thought that was what all kids wore. My feet were warm.
- **Your hunting** style: Stillhunting/walking, sitting on stand out in the open? Activity will help warm you. Seeing a shooter animal will, too, almost instantly. An enclosed blind is warmer because it blocks the wind

and can be heated. Wear the right socks and boots, especially since you will be less active in a stand. You will have less blood flow; it will be easier to get cold feet.

- **On a side note**, staying interested in, and observing, other wildlife -- birds, squirrels, maybe a bobcat, does and fawns, whatever you see -- will keep you alert to your surroundings and distracted from obsessing on your feet. You won’t forget your feet are there, regardless.
- **Look in** camping/ hiking stores, and in ski stores. Hunting clothing is catching up to the garments used by skiers and hikers, but not every market has that, although there is mail order. Skiers and hikers have long specialized in lightweight, insulative, warm garments, in inner and outer layers. Their exercise helps keep them warm, too. We, as hunters, simply are not accustomed to looking in such stores.
- **Medicare and** other insurance for special footwear. You may need special shoes or shoe inserts, sometimes custom molded to support your feet. Medicare Part B insurance may cover some of the cost of special shoes or inserts. Ask your doctor or podiatrist how you can get this special footwear. “Depth” shoes or inserts are available. Depth shoes look like walking shoes but have more room in them. The extra room is for different-shaped feet and toes, or for inserts made to fit your feet.
- **Never buy** shoes that are tight, not even if you think they will stretch as you wear them. Wear shoes that are comfortable and fit well when you buy them. You may not feel pressure from shoes that DO NOT fit well, but blisters and sores can develop when your foot presses against your shoe.
- **Keep boot** insides dry. Buy shoe dryers, if needed.
- **Foam cushioning** in boots often is measured in millimeters (3.50, 5.00, 7.00, 7.50); some insulation is measured in grams.
- **“Denier” means** tightness of fabric weave (outer material); the higher the number, the tighter the weave. Tighter weave is more water resistant/repellant, has more heat retention.
- **Heated insoles** often have high tech foam and fleece ‘footbeds.’



STEVE BARTYLLA

FINDING NEEDLES IN HAYSTACKS

RANDY HOEPNER/MINDIGO

As seasons are closing or winding down, the thoughts of many hunters and habitat managers start wandering to shed hunting. Who doesn't love finding a shiny chunk of intact bone, or, even better, a matched set? It's a thrill!

It even serves a couple useful hunting and management purposes, as well as giving us a reason to get off our butts. Though it's certainly no lock that the bucks whose sheds we find will survive until or be bigger next season, one sure doesn't hate the odds of either. It's often one of the first good feels we often get of what could potentially be next season.

Here's how I generally approach shed hunting and where I find most of the bone.

SPRING SCOUTING

I don't care how long I do this or how many years I've poured over a specific property, I ALWAYS learn new things on spring scouting trips, right after snow melt and before spring green up.

Absolutely all the sign posting Mr. Big did last season is there to be seen and pieced together. There honestly is no other time that Mr. Big's sign tells such a complete story. We merely need to read the sign to hear it.

That's really what my shed hunting trips are, thorough scouting missions, where I be sure to also check the obvious hot spots for sheds, while I'm at it.

THE HOT SPOTS

Which begs the question, where are those hot spots? Frankly, the reason one reads so much about bird dogging overwinter food sources and buck bedding areas for sheds is that's where one can find many a shed, particularly on those southern exposed, buck bedrooms.

Heck, don't ignore southern exposure when inspecting food and the trails we're about to talk about, either. Those exposures melt the fastest, giving easier access to the foods hidden beneath, as well as easier travels. At the same time, all else equal, a deer is warmer in the sun when feeding and walking as much as when bedding. That all make southern exposures in cold winter areas a bit more attractive to Mr. Big, all else equal.

We'll leave those areas alone for their own article. Instead, let's really focus on what is so often ignored, those trails connecting the bedding to the feeding. They're often ignored simply because bucks drop a surprisingly much smaller percent along the trails than they do in the food sources and in their beds.

That said, there's locations along those routes that are ripe for picking up complete sets. Those would be the fences, ditches, fallen trees, steep inclines or any other feature that deer must jump or exert themselves to cross. On features that must be jumped, both sides frequently drop together in the landing zones, or drop off as they struggle to climb or descend a steep incline.

CONCLUSION

Truth be told, my shed hunts are really scouting trips disguised as hunts for dropped bone. That said, when I'm out there, I may as well pick up as much antler as I realistically can. If that's the goal, be sure to check the hot spots along the trails connecting winter bedding to winter feeding, as well. They may not produce as many antlers per foot of dirt searched, but they more than make up for it in matched sets!



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Turnips have long been recognized as excellent livestock feed. However, this forage was quickly adopted by deer managers about a decade ago as a preferred item when warm-season foods such as clover, chicory and alfalfa disappeared from the whitetail's menu due to the changing seasons.

TURNIPS

CHARLES J. ASHMEIER



Of course, deer have a mouth structure more suited for nipping browse than munching large tubers, yet the ever-adaptable whitetail makes due when humans offer this highly nutritious food source.

In most Northern climates, whitetails are not fond of turnips during the warm growing months. However, after a few hard frosts, starch in the plant's leaves converts to sugar, making turnip greens attractive to hungry deer.

In some areas, it's not uncommon to have 3 to 4 inches of snow on the ground by mid-November. Consequently, deer in these Northern areas begin feeding on turnip leaves about the same time. Deer eat by nipping off about 2 inches at a time. If you walk into a turnip field that is beginning to be used by deer, you will see circular cuts in the leaves and stalks where the deer nip the plant off with their bottom incisors.

After the deer have fed in a field for a while, most of the leaves will be removed and the deer will begin to nip the remaining stalks, again about 2 inches at a time. Occasionally, the whole stalk will break off and the deer will eat the entire leaf in conveyor-belt fashion.

With smaller turnips in loose soil, the whole tuber will sometimes come up with the plant. The deer will eat everything, munching the tuber like an apple. However, consumption of the turnip tuber takes a little longer to kick into high gear.

Although deer will nibble the turnip tubers throughout fall, heavy utilization normally doesn't take place until early December in the North, and January in the South. From then on, deer will heavily feed on the tubers until they are gone.

Deer eat the buried turnip tuber by digging their incisor teeth into the flesh, giving the turnip the

appearance it has been scooped out with an ice-cream scoop. In ground that is not frozen, the turnip will often come out of the soil as the deer eats it.

In frozen ground, a deer will create a cavity as it eats the turnip directly out of the soil. Deer that are eating turnip tubers often have muddy muzzles.

Because of the effort it takes for deer to eat the turnips in frozen ground, many hunters find shed antlers in the plots when the snow melts.

— Charles Alsheimer was a D&DH contributor and field editor from 1979 until his death in 2017. He was widely considered to be one of America's top experts on white-tailed deer behavior.





DANIEL SCHMIDT

BUTCHER SHOP

BY TOM CARPENTER

The first time I butchered my own deer, it was more by necessity than choice. As a poor college kid, the \$35 or \$40 it took to pay a local butcher to do the job back then seemed pretty steep, and represented an awful lot of beer money.

My brother Chuck was in the same boat — maybe in even deeper water than me, because he had a wife and young kid to take care of. Dollars were even shorter in his world. So there we stood in Dad's garage with two yearling 7-pointers hanging from the rafters and a motley array of knives, hacksaws and other sundry tools, butcher paper, and our grandma's old hand-cranked meat grinder from Bohemia, in front of us.

Eight hours later, we had every stitch of meat off those deer, and we collapsed, exhausted, in Mom's kitchen. Somehow we got the job done and had a half-year's worth of random but wholesome venison cuts packaged up and ready to freeze.

These days, when people ask me if they should butcher their own deer, I help them find their own answer by walking through the following 12 questions. The responses you give will help you decide if home butchering is for you, and know if you're prepared with the right tools, materials and approaches to get the job done right.

1) **WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS, AND WHY DO YOU WANT TO BUTCHER YOUR OWN DEER?**

To start, it's essential to understand the motivations behind processing your own deer. Saving money is always a good answer. But for those savings, are you ready to exchange the time it takes to do the job right? Expect to spend three hours (at the low end) to five or six hours (at the high end) taking one deer from unskinned carcass to packaged cuts and cleaning up.

Control is another factor to consider. Self-butchering lets you process your deer exactly as you want it done. You know how the meat has been treated through the entire process, and you know for sure it's your own venison. Those are good reasons to butcher your own whitetail, too.

2) **DO YOU HAVE A COMFORTABLE AND CLEAN WORKSPACE TO USE?**

I've processed deer outside, from skinning to final cuts, on sunny-warm October and November days. But if it's nighttime, or the weather is inclement, you need a clean, comfortable and relatively sanitary place inside to work.

Garages, workshops and sheds are fine for butchering work, as long as you complete additional preparation such as cleaning all surfaces with a solution of half bleach and water, sweeping up, vacuuming dust, and generally tidying up and clearing out clutter and junk. Cover work surfaces with butcher paper before starting in.

3) **HOW WILL YOU GET THAT DEER HOISTED UP FOR EASY, EFFICIENT SKINNING?**

12 QUESTIONS ALL **DIY BUTCHERS** MUST ADDRESS

Venison Mandarin-Orange Teriyaki Stir-Fry

PHOTO & TEXT BY JACK HENNESSY

A proper stir-fry is perfect for venison as this hot-and-fast method ensures your game will finish at medium-rare (or close to it). In this instance, yes, you can use slices from any hindquarter roast, or you can even opt to use trim or cuts from the front quarter. With any cut of meat, when you shorten muscle fibers, you reduce chewiness. Because we are slicing our venison to bite-size pieces that are 1/4- to 1-1/2-inch thick, these smaller pieces, even from the front quarter, will result in a tender texture.

I have yet to find a store-bought teriyaki sauce that I enjoy, so years ago I took matters into my own hands. This sauce is not complicated and if you enjoy Japanese cuisine, you will find a lot of the ingredients here are interchangeable and can be used in many other dishes. For a side pairing that will serve as a foundation for your dish, you can choose Japanese noodles or rice, or work up some fried rice. The real star here is the venison stir-fry with homemade teriyaki sauce, so if you just want to eat that by itself, you could do that too.

If you don't want to slice vegetables, feel welcome to purchase a pre-sliced vegetable bag from the freezer section, or even a stir-fry kit. The overall goal is to make use of any cut of venison in a less-traditional, delicious dish.

INGREDIENTS (FOUR SERVINGS):

- + 1 pound venison trim or hindquarter roast, sliced into 1/4- to 1/2-inch pieces
- + 1 medium yellow onion, julienne
- + 1 cup fresh carrots, finely diced
- + 2 cups fresh broccoli, cut into florets
- + 8 ounces sliced baby portabello mushrooms
- + Kosher salt and ground black pepper, mixed use
- + Sunflower or peanut oil, mixed use
- + 2 cups basmati rice
- + 2 cups crushed peanuts for garnish
- + 1 stalk scallions (green onions), sliced (optional garnish)

MANDARIN TERIYAKI INGREDIENTS

- + 3/4 cup soy sauce
- + 3/4 Mirin rice wine
- + 3/4 cup honey
- + 1 tablespoon freshly minced ginger



- + 1-1/2 tablespoons freshly minced garlic
- + 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- + 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- + 1/2 teaspoon pure sesame oil
- + 2 to 4 teaspoons corn starch slurry (more directions below)
- + 2 mandarin oranges, peeled and split into slices

OPTIONAL PAIRINGS:

Rice noodles
Lo mein
Buckwheat Soba noodles
Ramen
Jasmine Rice
Fried Rice

DIRECTIONS:

Add all mandarin teriyaki ingredients EXCEPT mandarin orange slices and corn starch slurry to a medium sauce pot. Heat up honey so it pours easier. Set pot to simmer for half hour.

In another medium pot, add 2 cups basmati rice and 2-3/4 cups of cold water, cover with lid. Bring to boil then reduce to low once boiling. Once all water is absorbed, turn off burner and leave lid on.

To finish teriyaki sauce, add mandarin oranges along with corn starch slurry. (For slurry, start with 2 teaspoons of corn starch added to a mixing bowl, then drizzle in water and mix by hand until it turns to a liquid). Stir thoroughly and allow to simmer for 20-30 minutes. For thicker sauce, add 2 more teaspoons of corn starch slurry (or more).

In a wok or large cast iron skillet, heat a thin layer of oil on medium-high. Once oil surface temp reaches 500 degrees Fahrenheit, add onion, carrots, and broccoli and lightly salt and pepper.

Toss or stir until all vegetables are seared and slightly soft. Remove and set aside on a plate. Add another thin layer of oil then toss in sliced venison, lightly salt and pepper. Cook for long enough to get a sear, usually 2-3 minutes.

Add vegetables back along with sliced mushrooms. Stir and oil lightly if necessary, stir until mushrooms are slightly cooked, approximately 2 minutes.

To finish dish, add sauce to pan or wok with vegetables and venison, toss thoroughly then plate rice and top with venison and vegetables, ladle over extra sauce. Garnish with crushed peanuts and sliced scallions.

Enjoy! Reach out to me on Instagram (@WildGameJack) with any questions or comments.

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DANIEL SCHMIDT

Think about the task of getting that deer hung up by the gambrels so you can skin it. Will you need a block-and-tackle? Or do you have some friends or hunting buddies around to lift the deer way up as you pull a rope and then tie it off?

Skinning is best done on a calm and cool day outside, but you don't want the weather to be too cold or your hands will lose dexterity. Skinning inside in a clean shed, outbuilding or garage is fine, too.

4) DO YOU HAVE A SHARPENED KNIFE SUITABLE FOR SKINNING READY?

Skinning happens most efficiently when you use a tool that is well-suited to the job. A good skinning knife features a robust, protruding sweep of "belly" to the blade. That shape adds a lot of edge and contours for working skin off the deer's flesh. A true skinning knife gets the job done better and more efficiently than any straight-edged knife.

Your skinning knife should be sharp, but not with a razor-like edge.

A skinning knife that is too sharp will nick and slice through skin easily, getting hair on the meat.

On the other hand, a skinning blade with a dull edge is going to be clunky to work with. The right level of sharpness is a good edge, but one that's a little rough or raspy (use your sharpener's coarsest stone), and not honed down to a perfect razor edge.

5) DO YOU KNOW THE PROCESS FOR SKINNING A DEER?

Until you've done the job a few times, it's natural to fret about skinning your deer. The cure is knowing the process step-by-step. One good resource is my article, "How to Skin a Deer" in the November 2015 issue of this magazine. Efficient skinning is essential to keeping the meat clean and as hair-free as possible.

Inevitably though, you'll end up with a few hairs on the meat. Pick them off by hand, or don't be afraid to use a propane blow torch to singe off any extra hair. The less hair that is on the meat when you start sectioning and cutting, the better.

6) HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SECTION THE CARCASS DOWN INTO ITS NINE KEY COMPONENTS AND HANDLE THEM?

Once the skin is off, you need to break that carcass down into smaller components. These nine parts are: two front legs, two loins (top of the back), two tenderloins, (inside along the backbone), two back legs, and the remaining rib cage/neck that's still hanging.

Do you have someone to help as you break down the carcass? Two pairs of hands are better than one now. It's smart to have someone else hold the front legs as you slice the ligaments and tendons to remove each one. Your helper can hold the loins away as you peel them off. And the back legs are heavy — it takes one person to separate and saw them apart, and another person to hold the result so it doesn't drop to the floor.

7) CAN YOU PREPARE AND MAINTAIN A CLEAN, SANITARY WORK SURFACE FOR BREAKING DOWN THOSE LARGER PIECES INTO FINAL CUTS?

Good butchering doesn't happen on a flimsy card table. Skimping on a good place to work can be dangerous, too, so don't do it. Use a steady and sturdy table moved into your workspace, or clear off a workbench with plenty of elbow room. Clean the surface and cover with butcher paper as previously described.

8) DO YOU HAVE A SIMPLE AND SHARP BONING OR FILLET KNIFE (OR BETTER YET, BOTH) AT HAND FOR GETTING MEAT OFF BONES, ALONG WITH A GOOD HACKSAW OR BONE SAW IF NEEDED?

You can probably do most of your butchering work with a small fishing fillet knife (5- to 7-inch blade) and a

boning knife (blade of 5 inches or so). As opposed to your skinning knife, these tools should be as sharp as can be. More accidents happen with dull knives than with sharp ones now. Be ginger with your movements and cuts until you've got a feel for the sharpness level and how the knife reacts.

Keep a hacksaw or bone saw around. A hacksaw with a fresh blade will do just fine for sawing off the head after skinning the carcass, and for sawing down along one side of the spine to separate the back legs.

9) WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR THE FINAL CUTS YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE?

It's one thing to have the major sections of a deer off the carcass and sitting in front of you. It's quite another thing to know what you want to do next with those "macro" pieces.

What cuts are you going to make? The options are numerous, but the bottom line is this: Know your plan before you start breaking down those sections into final cuts:

- * **Chops (butterfly or medallion), from loin**
- * **Steaks from upper back leg, or top of rump**
- * **Roasts from front shoulder or back leg**
- * **Stew meat**

10) WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH THE TRIM MEAT FROM YOUR DEER?

Steaks, chops, roasts and stew meat are great. But you're going to end up with a third of your meat, or maybe more, in oddball chunks and extra pieces known as trim. Make your plan beforehand for what you are going to do with all of this important venison.

Ground venison is awesome, because you can use it in so many dishes and in so many ways. Have a good meat grinder at hand. Weston offers some great models that can help you grind venison fast at www.WestonSupply.com. As for other trim, cut it into chunks 1- to 2-inches square, and package it up for use later for other venison products such as those listed in the last question on our list.



DANIEL SCHMIDT

11) HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PACKAGE, LABEL AND FREEZE THE MEAT?

Before you start cutting, line up resources for packaging and freezing your meat. Your options include plastic freezer bags, lined freezer paper and vacuum sealer units.

Air is your No. 1 enemy in the freezer, and the longer you plan to have your cuts frozen, the more damage that air can do to the meat's texture and flavor. That's why a vacuum sealer (see models at www.WestonSupply.com) is such a smart investment. Your meat will stay juicy and delicious up to twice as long.

Until a vacuum sealer is in your budget, freezer paper is your second best option because you can fold and squeeze it to get most of the air out before taping up and freezing.

Do you have sticky-backed labels to mark each package's contents? Writing directly on paper packages with indelible markers can allow the ink to seep through to the meat before freezing and during thawing later.

12) ARE YOU READY TO MAKE YOUR OWN VENISON SUMMER SAUSAGE, BRATS, JERKY OR OTHER MEAT PRODUCTS?

One option for the trim you don't turn into ground venison is to take it to a butcher shop for further processing into the products listed above. But since you're doing it on your own anyway up to this point, a better plan might be to make your own. Weston (www.WestonSupply.com) offers a complete supply of tools, equipment and ingredients to help you.

CONCLUSION

The key to successfully butchering your own venison, and coming out with great results, is knowing what you want and being ready for the entire process.

So ask yourself these 12 questions — and know the answers — to be prepared and confident before taking knife to whitetail.





RICHARD P. SMITH

TWO BOONER

Phenomenal is the only way to describe the big buck hunting success of 21-year-old Gregory Shembarger from Berrien Center, Michigan. By the time he was 20, he had two Boone & Crockett-qualifying nontypicals to his credit, both of which scored more than 200 inches and each deer was shot with a muzzleloading rifle. Coincidentally, the racks of both bucks have 22 points.

Shembarger got the “smallest” of the two whitetails on property his family owns in southern Michigan’s Berrien County on November 23, 2021. The antlers from that whitetail gross scored 211 and netted 201 ¹/₈.

Gregory got his first booner in Illinois on December 5, 2019 at the age of 18 on property his family had been leasing for years. The massive rack on that deer had a gross score of 231 ⁶/₈ and netted 226 ³/₈. To put Shembarger’s success into perspective, it’s safe to say most whitetail hunters will never shoot one buck of the caliber Gregory got during a lifetime of hunting much less two.

If things had gone the way Gregory wanted, another family member would have gotten the Michigan 22-pointer. He was hoping his younger brother Jeffrey would have scored on that buck. In fact, he spent most of the 2021 Michigan firearms season acting as Jeffrey’s cameraman, hoping to film his brother shooting that whitetail.

Religious use of trail cameras to monitor bucks on their properties and the willingness to allow bucks to grow big racks before shooting them contributed to Gregory’s exceptional success. The elusiveness of some whitetail bucks was also a factor in allowing the Illinois buck to get as big and old as it did before Gregory got him. A broken antler during 2020, made it possible for the Michigan nontypical to live another year.

The fact that Gregory grew up in a family of avid whitetail hunters also played a role in his success. Fascination with deer hunting has been passed along by his grandfather (Greg) and father (Jeff). Shembarger’s uncles are also deer hunters. The family usually hunts together and

they all share in the anticipation of checking trail camera photos to watch the progression of antler development of various bucks as they age.

The family got photos of the bucks Gregory ended up shooting in both states for four years. They got their first photo of the Illinois buck during the summer of 2016, and they only got the one image. The whitetail had a typical rack that year that they guessed would have scored in the 160s and they estimated the deer’s age at 3 ¹/₂ or 4 ¹/₂.

“There’s no way any of us would have passed up on him that year, if we saw him,” Gregory wrote, “and, luckily he never gave us the chance.”

The Shembargers got one more photo of the Illinois buck during the summer of 2017 that was taken at the same spot and date and almost the same time. The whitetail’s antlers had a number of nontypical tines by then. The fact that only one photo was taken of the buck on their lease each of those years, it was obvious the deer was spending most of its time elsewhere, but that changed in 2018.



PHOTOS BY GREG SHEMBARGER

There were no summer photos of the buck on the land they hunt that year, but he was all over their farm by December. He was a regular in their bean field and the deer had even been photographed during hours of daylight. By 2019, they got even more images of the big nontypical at different locations on their farm, including daytime pictures during November.

The state's second gun hunt started December 5 that year and they had photos of the nontypical in a cut cornfield a couple of days earlier. The afternoon of the 5th, Gregory and his father posted on opposite sides of the cut corn, hoping one of them would get a shot at the monster whitetail. Forty-five minutes before dark, the nontypical followed a doe into the cornfield 220 yards from Gregory.

He dialed the Leupold Scope mounted on his .50 caliber Ultimate Firearms Muzzleloader, which was loaded with 150 grains of Triple 7 Powder, to that yardage as the whitetail turned broadside. After the

well-placed shot, the buck didn't go far before dropping in the field.

The Michigan buck that grew into a 200-inch nontypical first showed up on the Shembarger's cameras during 2018 as a 2 1/2-year-old 10-point. The whitetail grew 14 or 15 points during 2019 that would have scored about 150. By 2020, the deer's antlers had close to 20 points and would have measured in the 180s.

The buck was on their hit list that year and Gregory's grandfather could have shot the deer on opening day of gun season (November 15), but most of the animal's left antler had been broken off, so he passed him up. With even more antler growth in 2021, the deer hunting family hoped one of them would connect on the big nontypical. Since Gregory had already tagged a bigger nontypical, he was pulling for his brother Jeffrey to shoot the Michigan monster.

After tagging along with Jeffrey during most of firearms season without any luck on the buck they were after, Gregory overslept on

November 23 and he ended up going to a different elevated box blind than Jeffrey. As luck would have it, that's where the 22-pointer showed up behind a doe. He made a 145-yard shot on that buck with his Ultimate Firearms Muzzleloader.

Smoke from the shot obscured Gregory's view of the big nontypical, but he felt confident about the shot placement. Nonetheless, he rounded up his family members before going to look for the buck. When Gregory texted his brother to tell him what happened, Jeffrey didn't believe him at first. They didn't have any trouble finding the 5 1/2-year-old whitetail. The buck had a slug in his neck from a previous encounter with a hunter and dressed out at 195 pounds.

The Illinois Nontypical from 2019 dressed out at 190 pounds and was thought to be 7 1/2 or 8 1/2 years old.



Traditional archery has experienced a renaissance of late, with seasoned archers seeking an added challenge that turns even does into a big reward and others simply looking for a simpler bowhunting experience free of technological clutter.

Companies such as the venerable Hoyt, Howatt/Martin and Bear Archery Products, and myriad custom makers, are selling traditional bows in numbers not witnessed since before the late 1970s “Compound Revolution.” If you’ve caught the traditional bug, here are some pointers.

BUYING SINGLE STRING

Traditional bows gain 3 to 4 pounds per inch of draw and have no let-off. Draw weights are stated at a 28-inch IBO standard. When beginning, choose a bow pulling 45 to 50 pounds (even if you pull 70-pound compounds); a take-down model allows buying heavier limbs later if you wish to pull more.

Buy a bow that fits your draw length. Lengths of 56 to 58 inches are ideal for draw lengths less than 28 inches, 60 inches for 28- to 29-inch draws, and 62- to 64-inch for those with 30-inch-plus draw lengths. This assures a shooting experience free of finger pinch and limbs working within maximum performance parameters.

TRADITIONALLY SHAFTED

Less stored energy makes momentum most important to traditional performance, pointing to heavier arrows (10 to 12 gpi) with higher front of center (12 to 20 percent).

Carbon arrows with .500 (with 125- to 150-grain heads) to .400 (with heads up to 250 grains) deflection are deadly traditional projectiles. Check out Carbon Express’ Heritage (150 or 250), Easton’s Axis Traditional (500 or 400), Alaska Bowhunting Supply’s tapered Grizzly Stik Alaskan or Quest Products tapered Ironwood Lite.

Shooting arrows directly off the shelf (across something like Bear Archery’s Hair Rest) provides maximum pointability while shooting instinctive and makes 5-inch feather fletchings a traditional standard.

Choose heavier cut-on-contact broadheads — Steel Force, Zwickey or Simmon’s Sharks are names to remember — which slip through hide and muscle more efficiently.

TUNING TRADITIONAL

Tuning traditional bows is just as important as tuning compounds. Much of this is accomplished by discovering the perfect arrow/point combination. Perfectly tuned traditional arrows display clean flight but also center where instincts naturally direct the shot.

Trial-and-error fine-tuning is accomplished by manipulating the brace height (distance between handle and string, and changed by twisting or untwisting the string to vary overall length) and the nocking-point location (up/down serving, $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch above zero a standard starting point). Both of these affect vertical and horizontal impact.

Some fine-tuning also can be achieved by varying strike

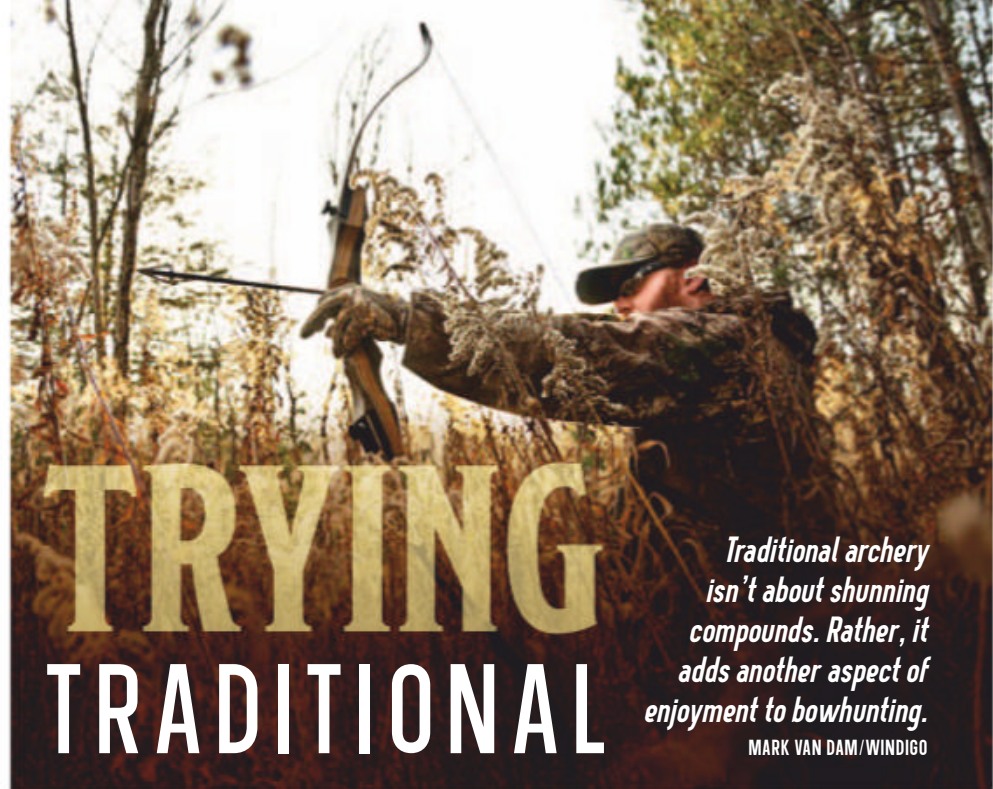


plate thickness (padding against the riser, typically leather).

Start by bare-shaft tuning; shooting a featherless arrow — with enough duct tape applied to the rear to compensate for missing fletching weight — into a backstop from 10 feet away and noting the arrow attitude.

Nocks pointing away from the riser indicate an arrow that’s not stiff enough (underspined), a point that’s too heavy or a strike plate that’s too thick.

Nocks cocked into the riser show an arrow that’s too stiff (overspined), point that’s too light or strike plate that’s too thin.

Upward-pointing nocks show the nocking point’s too high; downward the opposite.

TRADITIONAL SHOOTING

Traditional bows involve shooting with your fingers. Split-finger shooting’s (index finger over, middle and ring fingers under the nock) is the best for true instructive shooting with lower anchor points (corner of mouth or jaw-line); Apache (three fingers under the nock) is best for gap shooting (using arrow tip as aiming reference) while anchoring higher (cheek bone or just below eye). Grip the bowstring like you carry a bucket of paint, hooking fingers around the serving (bucket handle) while letting the remainder of the hand relax while drawing and anchoring.

Traditional and compound draw lengths should remain equal. At full draw, “push” the riser away with your shooting arm, holding the string at full draw using back muscles (back tension). Canting the bow opens the sight window, letting you get your eyes directly over the arrow for more positive instinctive shooting. This also provides more comfortable grip.

Aim small, miss small. Picking a finite small spot or visually creating one mentally while aiming is much more important in traditional shooting, as it gives you something to concentrate on.

Follow through. Traditional bows are slower than compounds, meaning any movement of the bow arm during release has more potential to negatively affect arrow impact.

Traditional bows take nothing away from compounds. They’re just another facet of our sport.





BILL KINNEY WINDIGO

7 THINGS THAT AFFECT DEER MOVEMENTS

Trying to understand how white-tailed deer move is like trying to understand how people move on a given day. In a human's case, age, personality, where they live, what they like to eat or the comforts they prefer might dictate movement. Not surprisingly, the reasons why whitetails move are very similar. To gain a better understanding of deer behavior, we must look at both the natural and physical factors that cause deer movement.

1. Food. The type and quality of food sources will greatly influence when they move and how far they will go to find the food they prefer

2. Cover. To survive best, whitetails must locate the thickest cover possible in the closest proximity to primary food sources.

3. Weather. Scientific studies show that most whitetail feedings occur when barometric pressure is between 29.80 and 30.29. When the barometer is falling or rising through this range, deer activity should be the greatest.

4. Season. Seasonal changes greatly influence deer movements. This is particularly true in some of the more

remote regions of the whitetail's range, where winter migrations occur. Of all the seasonal fluctuations, nothing trumps the movement that occurs during the rut.

5. Predation. Be it from coyotes, wolves, bears, cougars or man, can greatly suppress deer activity. Research has also shown more than a 50 percent drop in deer sightings between the first and fourth days of the firearms season, due to hunter pressure.

6. Age. Several studies have shown that the most active deer are those 2½ years old and younger. When most whitetails reach 4½ years, their activity level begins to drop off. The exception is during the rut.

7. Personality. Like humans, every whitetail has a different personality. Some are hyperactive, others aggressive toward one another and still others are laid back and reclusive.

The hyperactive, aggressive bucks are most active and, as might be expected, the ones that usually wind up on a meat pole during hunting season. Those that are laid back and reclusive often become extremely nocturnal and hard to find.



SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

A DO-IT-ALL DEER RIFLE

Four different people, plus one rifle, plus five shots each, equals 1 MOA.

That's what the .30-06 CZ Alpha 600 was able to do out of the box at 200 yards with Sierra 165-gr. TKG Gamechanger ammunition. When I first received the loaner rifle, all I had for testing was a few boxes of old hunting ammunition. Old, meaning slightly worn cardboard boxes with stickers advertising a price of \$6.80 for a box of 20 rounds. In today's world, that's ancient pricing.

Even so, from a rest the rifle managed just more than 1.5 MOA with that hunting, not match, ammunition. I'll admit that the .30-06 isn't my go-to round. Unless I'm shooting light reloads out of a Garand, it generally throws me around more than is fun. Even with all of the thrashing, this rifle still impressed me, and everyone at the range.

The new CZ 600 Alpha is available in nine calibers: .223 Rem., .224 Valkyrie, .300 Win. Mag., .308 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, .30-06, 6.5 PRC, 6mm Creedmoor and 7.62×39. The black polymer stock has a nice recoil pad. Although not adjustable, the 14-inch length of pull is manageable for most shooters. I most appreciated the "grip zones" on the stock inlaid with serrated soft-touch inserts for comfort and grip in less-than-ideal conditions. The polymer bolt knob is large and easy to quickly maneuver – a huge plus in my opinion. The action features an integrated Picatinny rail for easy optics mounting. For this project I selected the German Precision Optics (GPO) SPECTRA 4x 4-16x50i riflescope. This was my first experience with GPO and although I prefer MOA to Mils, the G4i reticle is incredible. Intuitive, easy to use, and just the right size. It also has adjustable parallax and an illuminated dot.

The cold hammer-forged barrel comes suppressor-ready. Also ideal is the adjustable trigger. You can choose between four different weights ranging from 1.3 to 3 pounds without needing to remove the action from the stock. Out of the box, the trigger pull weighed in about 2.5 pounds. Flush with the stock is a five-round magazine. It's a little different than most other magazines I've used, but comes with an instructional sticker. Push one side to release, the other to click into place.

One of the most important features of a hunting rifle is an easy-to-operate safety. The CZ 600 Alpha has a vertical two-position safety just above the grip, an ideal location for quick thumb operation. The rifle is simple to manipulate and at 7.3 pounds, is quite manageable. For carry, it features integrated sling swivels. CZ calls this a sub-MOA rifle at 100 yards – I found it was less than 1 MOA at 200 yards.



Below: A ShotMarker Electronic Target showing that the CZ's five-shot group with 165-gr. Sierra Gamechanger ammunition at 200 yards measured 0.93 MOA.

PHOTO BY SERENA JUCHNOWSKI



Arguably the best part? No sticker shock. The CZ 600 Alpha has an MSRP of \$749, but is available for close to \$700 retail price! Find out more at cz-usa.com.



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*Exertion myopathy
can easily kill a
whitetail that's been
stressed to the point
of no return.*

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
CHARLES J. ALSHEIMER

HARSH REALITIES

White-tailed deer fight to stay alive all of their lives, and human hunters and wild predators are not the only things working against them. Mother Nature can be both tough and cruel, as evidenced in how bucks bounce back from broken antlers and how they sometimes yield to the rigors of the rut.

When a buck breaks or severs an antler beam or tine while in velvet, there is a real possibility he will bleed to death or develop an infection.



When it comes to antlers, when a buck breaks an antler beam or tine fighting, the damage to the antler will not affect how future antlers will grow.

However, if damage is done to the antler pedicle (the cellular bone layer between the skull and antler) there is a real possibility that future antler growth will be compromised.

It's been my experience that when a buck breaks off an antler at the pedicle layer, causing damage to this layer, strange things take place with regard to its antlers in subsequent years. For the most part, the buck's antler that grows the following year will be abnormal, sometimes to the point that it doesn't even resemble the previous year's antler.

On the other hand, exertion myopathy is a condition that takes place when an animal overworks itself to the point that its muscles are starved and begin to break down.

When this happens the proteins released into the animal's bloodstream overwhelm the animal's kidneys, causing kidney failure and death. This condition is a real possibility for bucks in an unbalanced deer herd because they literally run themselves to death during the rut while trying to breed every doe they encounter. Over-exertion during the rut can also cause a buck to be so weakened coming out of the rut that it will wind up dying during the winter.

How often exertion myopathy takes place during the rut is anyone's guess. But after four decades photographing whitetails I'm of the belief that this condition is more common than we think when mature bucks make up a good portion of a herd.

— Charles Alsheimer was an authority on whitetail behavior for more than 40 years.





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Haha ... we'd say this is havin' fun and gettin' it done ...

GRAND SLAM OF HUNTING! CONGRATS TO DEER & DEER HUNTING CONTRIBUTOR BRAD FENSON ON HIS TEXAS TRIP OF A LIFETIME.

Congrats Brad!
#wearepursuit



PURSUIT CONTINUES DISTRIBUTION GROWTH

Pursuit Media, LLC announces another new streaming distribution partner for its Pursuit UP channel.

Pursuit Media LLC has reached an agreement with Plex that will bring the network's popular content to millions of new users via the Pursuit UP streaming channel.

Plex is an American streaming media service provider that's been around since 2008. Millions of users enjoy this popular and easy-to-use platform, and Pursuit UP will be joining its lineup of Live TV channels, making quality outdoor programming available to their audience. As with all Pursuit distribution platforms, there is no additional subscription cost to Plex users to catch their favorite hunting, fishing and shooting shows.

"We're very excited to announce yet another distribution addition for Pursuit UP," said Rusty Faulk, Founder and CEO of Pursuit Media. "Our vision has become a mission really, to seek out every possible outlet that we can to reach outdoors men and women who enjoy viewing popular outdoor programs. Streaming apps and platforms are seeing tremendous growth and our team is pursuing all options to make Pursuit content easily available to those users, and at no additional cost. As traditional outdoor networks continue to evolve, Pursuit remains committed to creating a distribution model that leads the way in market penetration, making it the best overall solution for outdoor content creators and manufacturers to reach consumers," he continued.

Reach out today to learn how Pursuit can help your business. #wearepursuit

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“For 2023, we focused on building a streamlined hunting system that had the least amount of noise and felt vibration in a fully setup bow,” stated Mark Hayes, design engineering manager. “The result is a complete hunting system that is up to 13% quieter with 37% less vibration.”

Resistance Phase Damping™ (RPD) stops vibration at the source, resulting in the smoothest shooting archery system Mathews has ever created. This first of its kind innovation tackles excess energy directly in the limbs which significantly deadens and silences post-shot vibration.

“The real value of RPD is maximized when paired with our new Bridge-Lock stabilizers,” says Hayes. “We challenged conventional stabilizer design and ended up with a radically improved bar that is better balanced, absorbs more vibration and allows hunters to fine tune their setup like never before.”

Expanding on Mathews exclusive Bridge-Lock Technology, the new Bridge-Lock Stabilizers offer improved balance points and a stiffer connection to your bow for added

vibration dampening and enhanced stabilization. InterLink™ Weight Technology makes adding and removing stabilizer weights easier than ever before with a redesigned threadless, stackable weight system that only requires one set screw for quick adjustments. Completed with a quick-disconnect knob allowing adjustability in ½-inch increments, the Bridge-Lock™ Stabilizers offer a new level of harmonic tuning and customization in a single bar. Available in 8-inch, 10-inch, and 12-inch length options and eight finish options to complete your hunting system.

The new Phase4 is available in 29-inch or 33-inch axle-to-axle lengths. The Phase4 29 has a 6-inch brace height and accommodates draw lengths from 25.5–30 inches. The Phase4 33 has a 6.5-inch brace height and accommodates draw lengths from 27–31.5 inches.

WWW.MATHEWSINC.COM



2 COMPACT CROSSBOW

TenPoint's new Flatline 460 is designed to deliver elite performance from the smallest footprint possible. The Flatline shoots a blistering 460 feet-per-second, measures only 26.5 inches short, and is equipped with all-new Scope Struts that provide rock solid mounting for the scope – delivering unrivaled durability and accuracy.

“The Flatline 460 is designed for the hardcore hunter – the hunter who walks a little farther, sits a little longer, and needs to make the most of that split second opportunity when it presents itself,” said Phil Bednar, CEO. “With its micro footprint – including shorter 16-inch arrows – it provides all the advantages of a low profile without sacrificing speed or accuracy.

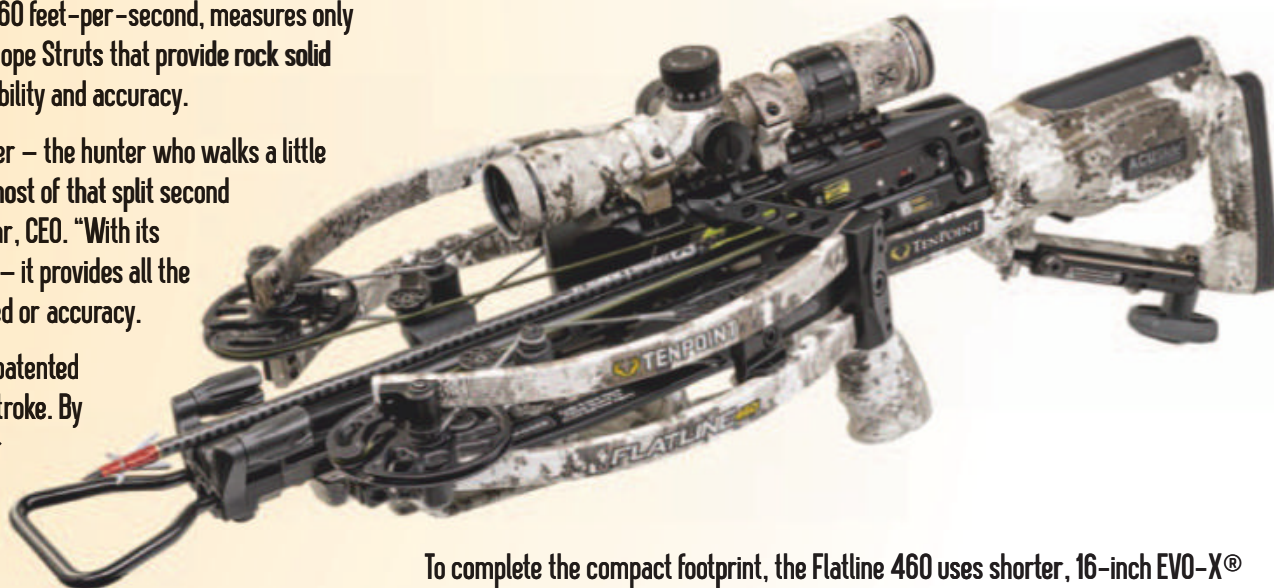
At the heart of the Flatline's speed and power is a patented reverse-draw bow assembly and 14-inch power stroke. By reversing the bow assembly and changing the riser mounting position, the string's resting position is extended farther down the rail which creates a 47% longer power stroke than a forward draw crossbow measuring the same length. This increased power stroke provides many advantages over forward draw crossbows:

- Generates top-end speeds that no forward draw crossbow can match.
- Generates more speed with less draw weight – creating a smoother, quieter shot, with less shock and vibration.
- Creates a longer nock-to-string engagement time during the shot – leading to greater accuracy.

In addition, the center-mounted riser provides superior balance, eliminating the “nose heavy” feel of traditional crossbows and making it easier to hold steady, increasing the shooter's accuracy.

The 16-inch MICRO-TRAC™ barrel reduces string-to-barrel contact by 50% to provide increased accuracy and the longest string life in the industry – surpassing competitor crossbows by hundreds of shots.≠≠≠

The Flatline 460's ultra-light, two-piece TEC-TACTICAL™ stock is built for comfort for shooters of all sizes and includes an adjustable butt plate that adjusts 1 inch to provide ideal fit.



To complete the compact footprint, the Flatline 460 uses shorter, 16-inch EVO-X® CenterPunch™ carbon arrows. The advantages of this arrow extend beyond its compact footprint in the quiver and lack of overhang on the crossbow – the shorter arrow provides a flatter trajectory and reduced wind drift at longer ranges as compared to a 20-inch arrow.

EVO-X CenterPunch 16 arrows weigh 400 grains and feature 17.5% FOC. Each arrow is inspected for straightness to within .001 inch and each package is weight matched to within 1 grain per arrow.

The patented ACUslide™ Cocking and De-Cocking System features the Auto-Brake Gear System that separates TenPoint from all other de-cocking crossbows on the market. The patented Auto-Brake eliminates the potential of losing control during de-cocking which can lead to injury or costly bow damage. While cocking and de-cocking with the ACUslide, the user can remove their hand from the handle at any point, with no other action required – and the handle will stop in place. In addition, while most crossbow crank cocking devices require 15+ pounds of force to operate, the ACUslide requires only 5 pounds of force, making it easy for people of all ages and abilities to cock the crossbow.

WWW.TENPOINTCROSSBOWS.COM



PRECISION DEER RIFLE

The Benelli Lupo BE.S.T. models are now chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor and .300 Win. Mag. with premium AA-grade walnut stocks well-thought ergonomics, making the Lupo one of the most comfortable precision rifles on the market.

The Lupo BE.S.T. rifles include the field-proven, glossy Benelli Surface Treatment (BE.S.T.) on the barrel – a finish so dependable in preventing rust, corrosion, and abrasion that Benelli backs it with a 25-year warranty.

BE.S.T. is a new proprietary finishing technology developed by engineers and scientists at Benelli's manufacturing headquarters in Urbino, Italy. It is a hybrid Physical Vapor Deposition (PVD) and Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition (PECVD) technology that applies a protective coating to parts. This coating provides corrosion and abrasion resistance superior to any other firearm finish on the market.

In addition to the glossy BE.S.T. finish on the barreled receiver, the rich walnut stock features a durable satin finish that speaks to classic rifle aficionados and stands up to the hard use and challenging conditions Benelli firearms are known to endure. The

function continues with the stock's Monte Carlo profile and integrated features that have made the Lupo a standout in the field, such as the Progressive Comfort recoil reduction system to mitigate felt recoil and muzzle rise. The AirTouch Grip surfaces along the forend and grip provide a solid purchase in all weather conditions.

The Crio-treated free-float barrel combines with a hardened steel barrel extension bedded to a steel block within an alloy receiver to deliver precise and repeatable point-of-impact. Other features include a detachable box magazine that blends smoothly with the chassis, top-mounted ambidextrous safety, a two-piece Picatinny rail system for optic mounting, as well as user-adjustable stock spacers to customize length-of-pull. The Lupo comes with shims to adjust drop, cast, and trigger reach for an even more custom fit. This innovative platform is driving new performance levels in the bolt-action rifle category.

The .300 Win. Mag. and 6.5 Creedmoor versions both weigh 7.1 pounds and feature satin walnut/gloss and 24-inch barrel. The .300 Win. Mag. has a 1:11 RH twist, while the 6.5 Creedmoor has a 1:8 RH twist.

WWW.BENELLIUSA.COM

3

TOP-END DEER CARTRIDGE

Federal has long been able to build extremely tough, expanding bullets for hunting big game. They also load sleek, extremely accurate match-style bullets for long-range target shooting. But combining both of those qualities into a single bullet has been more complicated. However, their new Terminal Ascent successfully combines both attributes.

Federal took all the lessons learned during the past few decades building its own proprietary bullets and poured all that knowledge and experience into creating its best hunting bullet to date.

The new Terminal Ascent blends the features of top match-style bullet designs with the industry's best bonding technology and components to deliver any-range accuracy and reliable expansion even at low velocities. This outstanding bullet design provides high weight retention, deep penetration and lethal terminal performance, both up close and at extreme distances.

"Terminal Ascent is simply the best all-range, all-velocity hunting ammunition available," said Federal's J.J. Reich. "Its design outperforms everything else in the vast Federal catalog of options, plus all the competition's best loads."

Terminal Ascent features several key elements that make up its superior overall design.

First is the solid-shanked and bonded bullet construction. A bonded bullet has a lead core bonded to the copper jacket around that core. A solid shank means the bullet has a thick, solid copper base at the bottom of the bullet to support the lead core. Terminal Ascent's solid copper shank and bonded lead core retain weight for deep penetration and energy dump, delivering extremely effective wound channels and terminal performance. A large hollow cavity in the bullet nose, along with exterior jacket skiving, further aid expansion and penetration. Serrations allow petals to peel back on contact at velocities as low as 1,400 fps – speeds typically seen 1,200 yards downrange in the 200-grain, .30-caliber loads.



Second is the AccuChannel grooving. Like many of the most versatile bullets, Terminal Ascent features grooving along the shank to improve accuracy across a range of rifles, while decreasing barrel wear and fouling. However, unlike conventional grooving, the AccuChannel's highly technical shape accomplishes these goals with only a minimal increase in drag.

Third is the Slipstream heat-resistant polymer tip. The Slipstream Tip features patent-pending hollow-core technology. A small cavity runs the length of the shank all the way up to just below the point itself. That point breaks free upon impact, allowing fluid to enter the hollow core, where it generates pressure and easy expansion, even at low velocities.

The new line of ammunition will be initially launched in 11 options, including 6.5 Creedmoor 130-grain, 6.5 PRC 130-grain, .270 Win. 136-grain, .270 WSM 136-grain, .280 Ackley Improved 155-grain, 28 Nosler 155-grain, 7mm Rem. Magnum 155-grain, .308 Win. 175-grain, .30-06 Sprg. 175-grain, .300 Win. Mag. 200-grain, and .300 WSM 200-grain. All are sold in 20-count boxes.

Federal also offers its Premium Terminal Ascent as components for handloaders.

WWW.FEDERALPREMIUM.COM

4

carefully reached for my radio, turned it on and whispered, "Anybody home?"

There was a long pause. John and I had agreed to assume the other

was occupied if we didn't receive a response. I was just about to turn the radio off when static crackled in the earpiece. I then heard John whispering slowly and deliberately.

"Two bucks in the brook. They're coming right at you. Out."

SWITCHING GEARS

The calm I had been momentarily blessed with immediately evaporated. My mind and pulse raced.

John was on a large knoll due north of me. I was facing south, so the bucks would come from behind. Not knowing how long ago he saw the bucks, I dared not move to get in better position. Craning my neck, I gave myself a headache trying to see out of the corner of my left eye. Minutes passed. A half-hour passed.

Nothing.

I took one more look, then gambled and quickly turned and faced south. Peering over the root mound I had been leaning against, I watched the brook. Not a moment had passed

WHERE TO GO

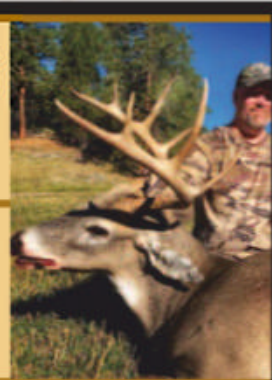


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when I heard footfalls in the crisp beech leaves.

The sounds came from the brook. If it was the bucks, I wouldn't have a shot until they passed into the saddle.

Then the crunching stopped abruptly. I strained to see through the brush. After a pause, the noise continued, but this time it was coming straight up the bank toward me.

My heart thudded, but I was ready. Suddenly, an orange wool cap appeared on the edge of the bank, not 30 yards away. I felt as if someone let the wind out of me. The hat turned this way and that as its wearer searched the woods.

For a moment I thought it might be John following the bucks, but he would never intrude on my area, especially knowing deer were headed my way. When the hunter finally climbed out of the brook, I recognized him as a member of a camp on an adjacent property. He had permission to be here, but he also knew which spots we hunted and which ones he should avoid.

I was surprised to see him out roaming around on opening day, especially here. To say I was angry would be an understatement, but I was friendly nonetheless. From the sheepish wave he gave me, I expected him to slink off quietly, embarrassed at the intrusion. When he walked toward me, I expected him to apologize and then disappear.

When he sat down next to me, I was stunned.

"Joel, right?" He said, removing his glove to shake my hand.

"Yep," I said, trying to contain my frustration as we shook hands.

"So what have you been seeing?"

"Nothing," I said, still watching the brook, although I knew the bucks were long gone.

NO CLUE

I expected the intruder to make with some small talk and leave. He didn't. After gabbing for a few minutes, he sat down, rested his rifle across his lap and began silently watching the woods.

"He's hunting!" I thought to myself. "What on earth does he think he's doing?"

Incredulous, I knew I had to get him out of there, especially if the bucks were still roaming around the brook.

"Well," I said, standing up and

stretching, "what do you think?"

Instinctively standing as I did, he waited for my cue.

"Are you going to still-hunt back toward your camp now?" I said.

"Yeah, I think I'll do that," he replied. "Maybe take an early lunch break."

"OK," I said sternly. "You might want to say away from this area tomorrow. I'll probably be hunting here again."

A look of confused understanding crossed his face. "Oh. Oh!" he stuttered. "I hope I haven't messed you up today."

I was still in a state of disbelief when he disappeared into the timber behind me. I was dressed in orange and had a rifle across my lap. Had he thought I was up here bird-watching?

I settled back against the base of the tree, once again facing south. I had given up watching back up the brook, because that's where my visitor had come from. Looking at my watch, I wasn't surprised that an hour had passed. It was 10 o'clock, right on the nose. I turned on the radio and called John.

"Did you see the bucks?" he asked.

"No, I had a visitor," I said disgustedly.

"There were two of them," he continued. "I couldn't get a shot. They were headed in your direction. Going right down the brook."

I sighed, then signed off. Leaning back against the tree, I stared at the sky.

I was aggravated because my quiet little place in the woods had been invaded. I considered looking for another spot, but I hated to get up and move around too much on opening morning.

STICKING IT OUT

Although my confidence in the creek crossing was gone, I decided to stay put and sulk the rest of the morning.

That's when I spotted the deer.

They were about 150 yards away when I saw them trotting alongside the south bank of the brook. They soon neared the saddle and stepped within 100 yards.

I flipped open my scope covers and rested the rifle across my knees in preparation for a shot.

Placing the scope on the first deer, I saw it was a forkhorn. The other

deer seemed bigger, but I couldn't see its head. The forkhorn was a good-looking deer, so I decided to shoot him if he stepped into the open.

I kept the cross-hairs on his shoulder as he passed through some thick saplings. When he reached the saddle, I slid the safety off. However, instead of crossing the brook, the two deer continued on up the other side.

I dialed the scope up several notches and waited for an opening. It never came.

As they disappeared over a knoll, I got a glimpse of a small rack on the second deer. They must have been the bucks John saw. They were heading in his direction, and I expected to hear a gunshot at any moment.

ANOTHER VISITOR

When I heard crunching in the leaves behind me, I assumed the gray squirrel returned to dig for beech nuts. I turned carelessly only to see the rump of a deer sticking out from behind a large hemlock not 20 feet away.

I eased forward and saw a 4-point rack protruding from behind the other side of the tree.

"Where did you come from?" I thought.

The buck must have crossed the brook, walked in the tracks of my previous visitor and climbed the bank behind me. I watched out of the corner of my eye as the buck slowly walked away while feeding on the beech nuts.

When he stepped behind a brush pile, I knew it was now or never. I quietly turned to my left, got into a prone position, shouldered my rifle and peered through the scope.

All I saw was brown.

He spotted me and was about to run when I frantically found his ears in the scope and followed the ridge of his neck before squeezing the trigger. The shot dropped him in his tracks.

My radio crackled to life a few moments later, and John's excited voice echoed in my ear.

"So, what happened?" he asked.

"Well," I replied. "Where would you like me to start?"

— Joel Spring has been a D&DH contributor since the 1980s.



I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THE HUNTER ROAMING AROUND ON OPENING MORNING OF GUN SEASON. FROM THE SHEEPISH WAVE HE GAVE ME, I EXPECTED HIM TO SLINK OFF QUIETLY. HE DIDN'T.

THE VISITOR

I don't usually let things get to me. I think I'm pretty calm and mild-mannered. But I was becoming unraveled.

The day — opening day of rifle season — always holds special meaning to me, as it does to thousands of hunters across the country. There's something magical about planting yourself in an area that holds memories and personal history. The spot I was hunting was rich in both.

The place, a small stand of hemlocks at a creek crossing in a huge beech woods, is one of my favorites because it's far from civilization. Just sitting against one of the old hemlocks and overlooking the funnel fills me with anticipation and high expectations. I should have been in heaven.

But I was going absolutely mad.

FAST START

The morning had started like so many opening days before. Even in the dark, I had slipped through the woods on a straight, familiar course. The first few tenuous strands of daylight sparked on the horizon as I settled into a hollow at the base of the hemlock tree.

After clearing some leaves away from the base of the tree, I loaded my rifle. The first few moments of shooting light found me listening intently to rifle shots in the distance, wondering if any of them came from my three companions. Looking at my watch, I knew it would be a while before I would find out. John, who was hunting several hundred yards down the brook, asked me to call him on the radio around 9 a.m. That was two hours from now.

I was edgy for some reason, and I nearly jumped out of my skin at the sound of leaves shuffling a few feet behind me. My heart raced frantically until I slowly turned and saw a fat gray squirrel. I took some deep breaths in an effort to calm myself.

I was finally settled by our check-in time. It was easy to be calm. The woods were positively dead. With my gun on my lap, I surveyed the deer trail below. A doe fawn had appeared earlier, slipping down into the saddle and stopping at the brook to drink. Having satisfied its thirst, the fawn climbed the steep bank, walking less than 30 feet from my tree before disappearing into the hardwoods.

I had seen nothing since then, not even squirrels. I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 78

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