

AGING ON THE HOOF

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Kerr Wildlife Management Area

Texas Parks and Wildlife

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hillcountry

The ART of Aging White-tailed Deer on the Hoof

(not an exact science)

How Old Are These Bucks ???



There are some basics to understand, but body condition, time of year, high protein supplements, and geographic location will effect aging on the hoof.



**“NUBBIN”
BUCK FAWN**

**This is NOT a
SPIKE BUCK**

**NO HARDENED ANTLERS
PROTRUDING THRU THE
SKIN**



**This is a yearling buck (1.5 yrs.)
with no visible hardened
antlers – note that the pedicle
is flat and not rounded as on
the “nubbin” buck fawn below.**

Photo taken in October of 1½ yr. old



SPIKE BUCK

Normally 1.5 years old

**Not all yearlings
are spikes, but
most spikes are
yearlings.**





YEARLING BUCK

(1.5 years old)

**Slender neck that meets
body at mid-chest**

**Ears normally appear
large**

**Head is slender from
front and side and
tight skinned**

**Antler spread normally
WITHIN ear tips**



Yearling Buck

Slender Head

Slender Neck

Slender Body

(slight on mass and muscle)

Legs appear long



1.5 yr. old

2.5 yr. old

See how neck meets chest / brisket

Legs appear long on 1.5 yr.old bucks. As a buck gets older the legs appear to become shorter as compared to body depths.



??????

**This buck could
either be a good
yearling OR a
low-end 2.5 year
old**

AND/OR

**Good quality 1.5
year olds often
look like the
average 2.5
year old**

Be Careful !



2.5 – 3.5 year old

**Neck appears full
but not swollen
and meets body
just above brisket
swirl.**

**Chest and
hindquarters
appear to have
same depths**

**Top of back
usually straight**



3.5 year old buck—full neck, skin tight under jaw, chest and hindquarters appear to have same depths, belly not obvious.

Profile of head



Immature



Mature

A photograph of two deer in a field with bare trees. The deer on the left is larger and has more developed antlers, while the deer on the right is smaller and has less developed antlers. The background consists of several bare trees and a field of dry grass.

Mature (4-5 yrs.)

Immature (3 yrs.)

Look at head, swelling of neck, chest, hindquarters, skin under jaw, length of legs – BUT remember deer are like people – NO TWO ARE EXACTLY ALIKE



Mature Buck

(4.5 years or older)

Note muscle definitions on neck, shoulders, and hindquarters

Chest is deeper than hindquarters

Forehead and eyes may appear broader than on immature bucks

Photo taken before rut



MATURE BUCK

(4.5 years and older)

**Chest appears
deeper than
hindquarters**

**Neck swollen and
blends into brisket**

**Loose skin under
jaw on many mature
bucks**

Photo taken at end of rut

Note absence of belly



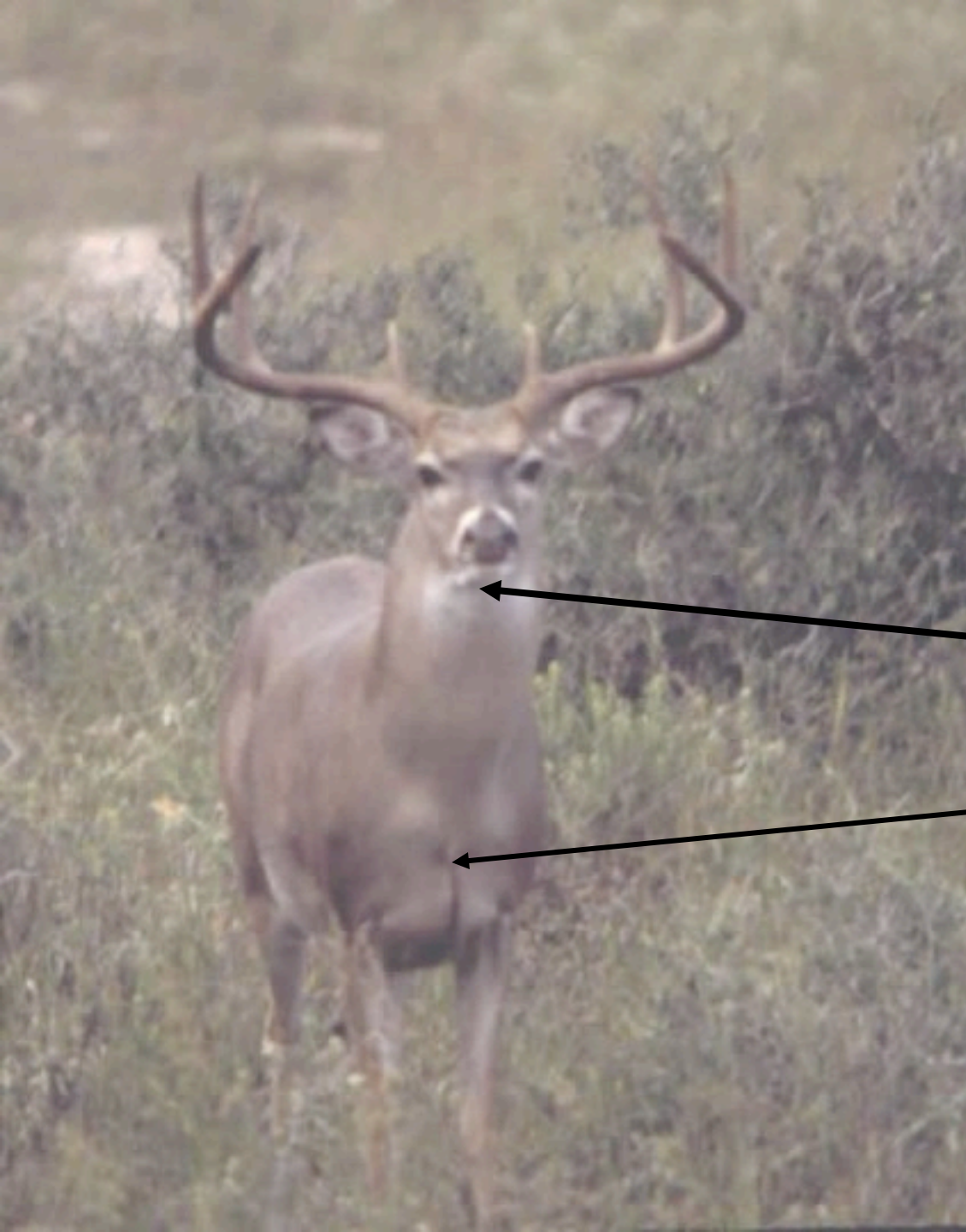
Mature Buck

Swollen neck

Muscular chest

Loose skin
under jaw


This is what a healthy buck 4.5 to 6.5 years old should look like in the prime of life on **good habitat**



Mature Buck

**Notice loose
skin under jaw
line**

**Broad, full chest
and brisket**

A photograph of two deer in a field of tall, dry grass. The deer in the foreground is a buck with large, well-developed antlers, looking towards the camera. The deer in the background is also a buck with smaller antlers, looking slightly to the left. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment with a mix of green and brown grass.

Buck in front is 3-4 years old and buck in back is “old enough”



South Texas



Hill Country

**Profile showing
thickness of head –
forehead to jaw on
mature buck**



Mature

Neck (swollen)

Chest (broad)

Muscles (defined)

Legs (short)

Belly (sagging)



Mature

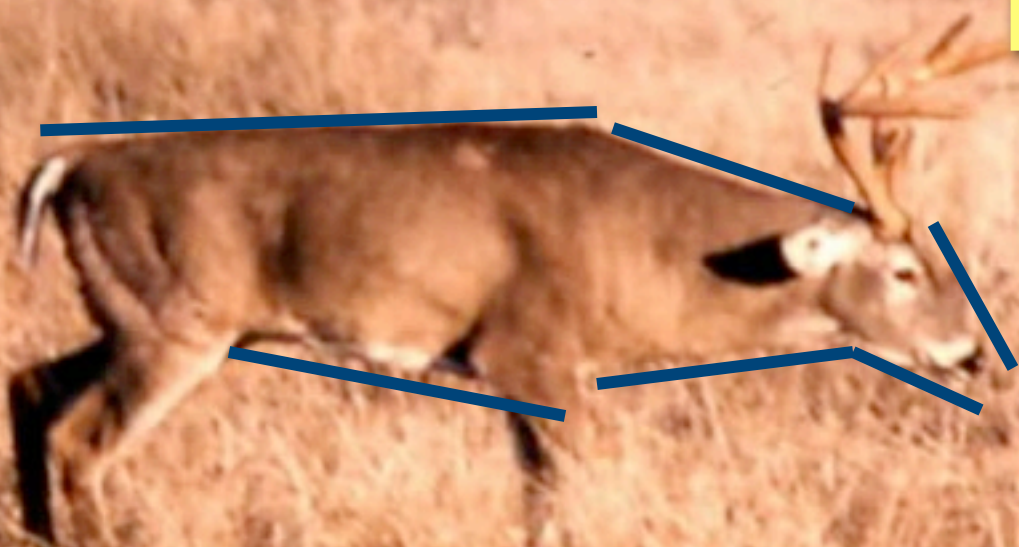
Hindquarters

Chest

Neck

Head

Look at these characteristics





“OLD”
and
NOT HEALTHY



The size of the antlers is not always a good indicator of age!!!!

THIS IS A YEARLING BUCK (1.5 YEARS OLD)



Donnie Harmel White-tailed
Deer Research Facility

Kerr Wildlife Management
Area

2002

Buck # 01-12

Age: 1.5 yrs

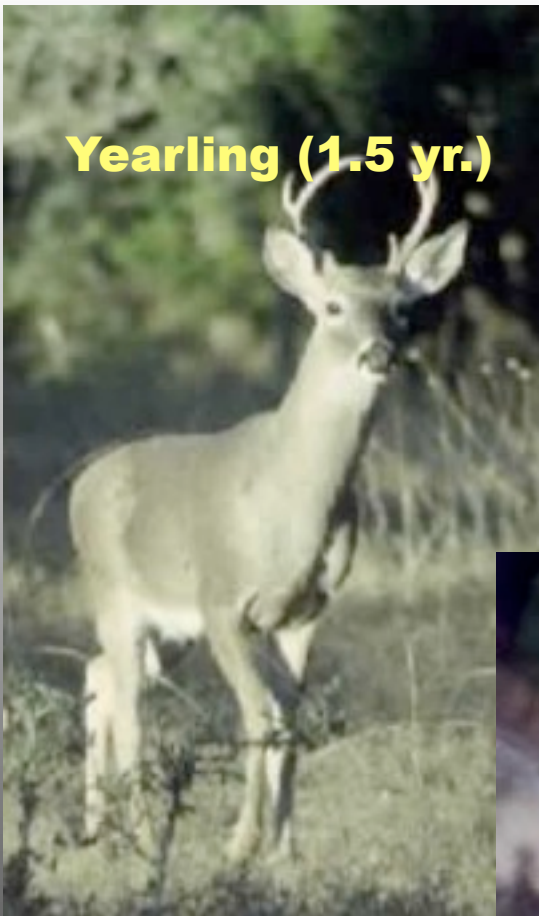
Weight: 136 lbs.

12 points

20 1/4 in. spread

133 5/8 GB&C

Yearling (1.5 yr.)



MATURE



Immature





Mature

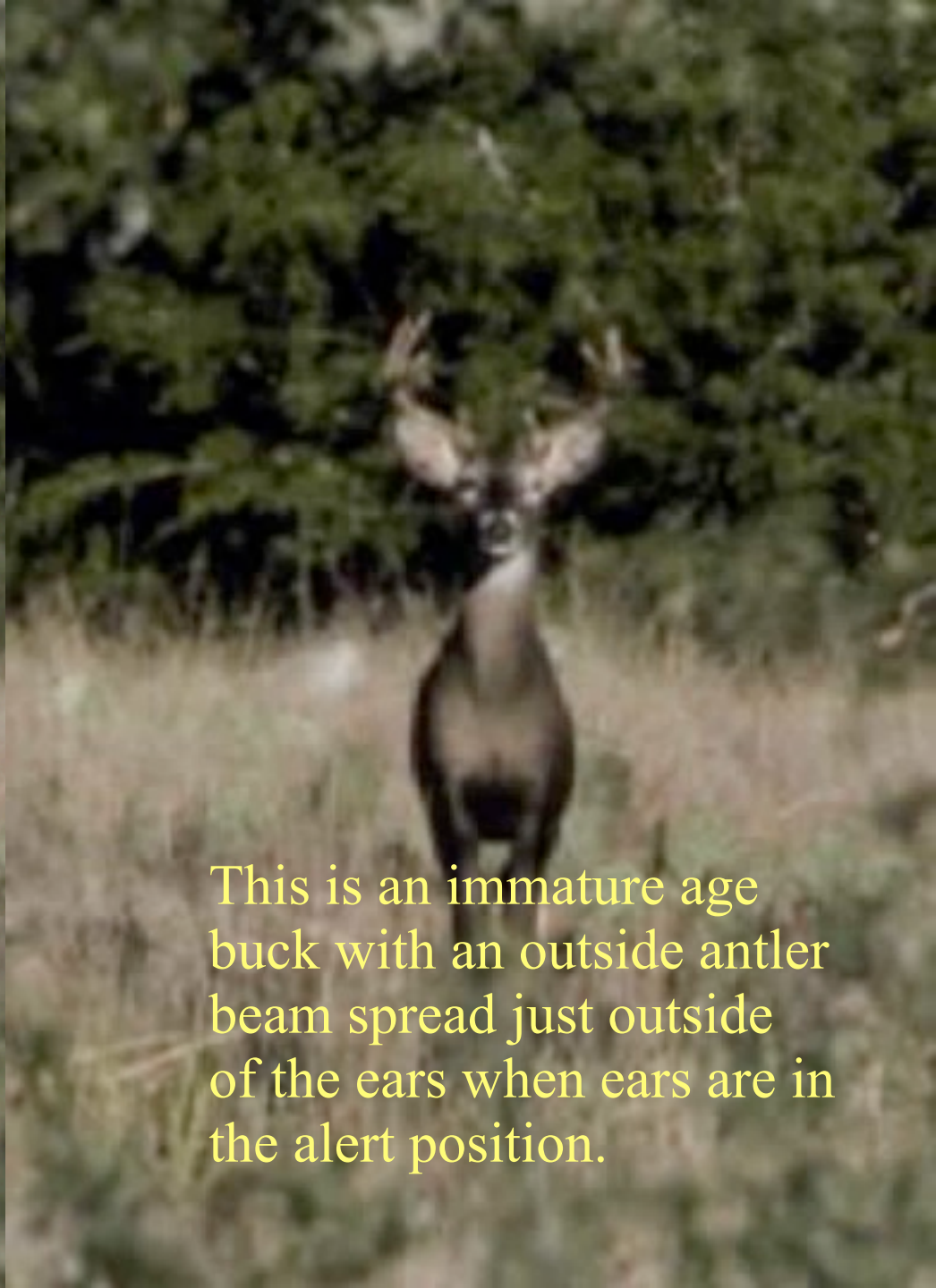
Immature

Yearling

How Old Are These Bucks ???



**How wide is
the
spread ??**



This is an immature age buck with an outside antler beam spread just outside of the ears when ears are in the alert position.

**How about this
buck's spread ?**





Wide Enough

**Do you see the
DOE ???**

