

## **Diversified**

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### **Whitetail Deer Antler Facts**

Unlike horns on cattle which are permanent, male deer lose and re-grow their antlers every year. In the whitetail deer family only bucks over 1 year old have antlers. During winter bucks lose their antlers and then begin to re-grow new antlers. As the antlers grow they are covered in a soft hairy skin called velvet. The velvet supplies blood to the growing antlers and protects and feeds them. Once antlers reach full size, the velvet begins to die off and the bucks rub it off on trees and brush. In addition to removing the velvet from their new antlers, buck rubs also help to strengthen the neck for the upcoming rut. Antler growth in a deer is largely dependent on the age of the deer, genetics, and diet. As a deer matures it will typically grow more times and eventually max out and then become smaller year after year as the deer ages. In a whitetail buck the antlers typically reach optimal development around 5 to 6 years of age. A whitetail buck's main antler beam curves forward without dividing or branching. A mule deer bucks major antler beam, on the other hand, grows upward with a dichotomous (dividing or branching) fork.

#### **Facts About Deer Antlers**

- Whitetail deer antlers begin to grow in the early spring (usually March or April). By late summer a whitetail's antlers are fully-grown.
- Whitetail deer antlers are one of the fastest growing tissues known to man.
- The growth of a deer's antlers usually starts to grow out of the deer's head toward the back of the deer and then changes direction and grows toward the front of the deer's head.
- Deer antlers have been known to grow as fast as ½ inch per day
- While a whitetail's antlers are growing they are covered with velvet. Velvet is a living tissue that supplies blood to the antlers allowing them to grow. While a deer's antlers are covered in velvet they are very sensitive to touch and easily broken.
- Once the deer's antlers are fully grown they will become hard and the velvet will begin to fall off. Bucks will rub their antlers against trees and saplings to rub off the dead velvet material.
- Bucks don't grow their first set of antlers until they are ten months old. Most young deer have smaller antlers because much of their nutrition goes to support their growing body.
- When a mature deer is injured or has poor nutrition its antlers will often be smaller than a healthy animal of the same age.
- Pedicles are the part of the buck's skull where antlers grow from. Buck fawns have pedicles but unless very close to the deer it is hard to distinguish a buck fawn from a buck doe by the pedicles.
- A buck fawn has no antlers and is often referred to as a button buck.

- Deer antlers are often referred to by hunters as horns. However antlers are not technically horns. Deer antlers once fully formed are dead tissue and fall off and then are re-grow every year. Horns continue to grow for the life of an animal.
- Many hunters believe that you can tell how old a whitetail deer is by the size of its rack. This is not true. A buck's antler mass will peak around 5 to 8 years of age but the bigger determining factor for antler size is genetics and nutrition of the deer. The only reliable way to age a deer is the teeth.
- Studies have shown that only around 10 percent of a whitetail buck's potential antler development is reached by the age 1.5 years
- At 2.5 years old a whitetail buck has still only grown around 25-35 percent of his potential antler mass. However most bucks only reach 3 to 4 years old due to hunting pressure.
- Whitetail does don't typically grow antlers but under rare circumstances some does have grown antlers. This is believed to be due to a hormone imbalance and is a very rare occurrence in whitetails. The only female deer that regularly grow antlers are reindeer.
- Even though a buck doesn't grow antlers the first year good nutrition is very important for buck fawns. During the first year of life the young bucks grow pedicles (The future base for the antlers) and as the buck matures the larger the pedicel the better the chances that the bucks will have a bigger rack in the future.
- Whitetail bucks that are taken with bow and arrow are scored by Pope and Young. Rack scoring by 'Pope and Young' or 'Boone and Crockett' (for gun harvests) use a formula to measure the antlers that allows hunters to compare bucks racks in a fair way.
- Most deer scoring systems break deer antlers into two distinct classes based on the "style" of the rack. These two scoring classes are typical and non-typical racks. Both typical and non-typical racks are measured exactly the same way except for the fact that for typical racks you subtract for abnormal points and Non-Typical racks you add abnormal points on the rack.

Source: [www.biggameologic.com](http://www.biggameologic.com)

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