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Influences On Whitetail Deer Activity

By John Cook

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by: **John Cook**

Much has been written about deer movement in hunting magazines and I have been intrigued by differences in deer activity over the years myself. We have all been in the woods or maybe just while driving to or from work and noticed large differences in deer activity. You will have some days when you see many deer from your tree stand and other days when, from that same stand at the same time of day, you won't see a single deer. It is also most obvious when you drive to and from work at similar times each day and see large swings in deer activity. After thinking about these changes in deer activity, reading several articles and my hunting observations over the years I've found several situations that effect deer movement.

The Rut

Some would say that the rut causes the demise of more mature bucks than any other factor. There's no doubt that deer are very active during the rut. It is an exciting time to be in the woods. The woods can explode around you at any time during the rut and at about any time of the day. All deer hunters have stories of seeing bucks on the prowl. One year a spike buck let me take three shots at him. The doe that this buck was following ran right by me. When the buck ran by I got him stopped and he just stared at me. After my first shot missed he moved a few feet and let me miss another shot. When the doe saw that I had missed, she ran him back by me again. I think that she was trying to use me to get rid of him. Fortunately I've learned a thing or two about shooting a bow since this episode almost twenty years ago.

Weather

I have noticed that weather conditions and upcoming storms have an effect on deer activity. Warmer than average temperatures during hunting season definitely minimize deer activity. I also have found that wind makes deer very skittish. It seems that wind messes up all of their senses. The wind causes everything in the woods to move confusing their sight as well as both masking and making noise. I

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would also think that their great sense of smell is also confused as well. I have spent many days out hunting on windy days where I couldn't hear anything or tell what was or wasn't moving it's no wonder that the deer lay low on these days. Deer don't seem to mind a mild rain, but when the rain is falling heavier I've seldom seen a lot of activity.

Changes in the weather definitely cause the deer to move. Most likely it is the change in barometric pressure that triggers deer before large storms arrive. On several occasions I have noticed deer out feeding at odd times of the day in the hours preceding a storm.

The Moon

There have been articles written on the effects of moon phases and moon position on deer activity. I haven't figured this one out yet but I think that there must be something to it. I have seen increased deer activity on days when I can't use the rut or weather to explain it. Research has been conducted in

an effort to determine the effects of the moon phases in relation to the start of the rut. What I have read of this information seems promising as far as predicting the start of the rut and the intensity of the rut. A few years ago there was some research into the effects of moon positioning, or in other words when the moon was high in the sky, on deer activity. I haven't seen any further discussions on this theory in the past couple of years. I have to believe that if the oceans tides can be predicted with the moon than we might also expect the animals to be effected as well.

Most of us only have a limited number of days that we can hunt each year and the best that we can do is to take full advantage of this time. If you can plan your hunting time in advance and you want high deer activity you should plan your hunt during the rut or pre-rut when moon prediction gurus say activity will be at the heaviest and pray for the right weather. In the end, the best way to handle changes in deer activity is to be in the woods as much as possible.

Please visit my web site at

I have been deer hunting in West Virginia for close to 30 years. Now I am teaching my children to hunt and enjoy it more each year.

Aging Whitetail Deer At Various Stages

By David Selman, Tracker-Outdoors.com

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Aging a Yearling Deer Yearling deer can be easily aged by examining the third tooth back on either side of the jaw. This tooth is called the third premolar. If this tooth has three cusps, the deer is 1 1/2 years old. If the third premolar has only two cusps, the deer is 1 year and seven months old or older.

75% of deer harvested in the U.S. are yearling deer.

Telling the Age of a Whitetail Buck

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In December of 1998, the Field and Stream magazine had an article that I found interesting about a method for aging deer in the field. Here is my short version;

The twisting and turning of a deer's ears results in permanent creases in the hair and skin around the base of the ears. Deer 2 1/2 years or younger seldom have ear creases. But by 3 1/2 years the hair has thickened and taken on at least one crease. A two crease deer is a mature animal and is usually between 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 years old. If a deer has three creases at the base of the ears, it is likely about 7 1/2 years old give or take a year. If a deer has 4 ear creases, it is likely more than 8 years old. Also, as a deer ages, hair thickens in the ear slot. Finally, an older deer's ears tend to be more curled in and tired in appearance while a younger deer's ears will be flatter and more alert in appearance. Telling the age of a deer with the ears method is most accurate on well conditioned animals.

Article By Tracker Outdoors
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None

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