

# YOUNG BUCK or OLD BUCK?

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## A YOUNGER BUCK:

- Appears to be a doe with antlers.
- Has legs that seem too long for body.
- Often lacks good definition in muscles.
- Has a slender neck and body.
- Has antlers that tend to be thin.

## A MATURE BUCK:

- Has legs that look proportional to the body size.
- Has a neck the same width or wider than face.
- Is proportional from front to rear of body.
- Has a belly and a back that are flat and tight.

## AN OLDER BUCK:

- Has legs that look a bit short for body size.
- Has rippled skin around neck and face.
- Might have some gray visible around muzzle.
- Has a belly that tends to sag.
- Has a neck and chest that seem to be 1 large muscle.
- Has a forehead that's usually darker than the muzzle.

## WHAT ARE ANTLERS?

### AND CAN THEY TELL ABOUT A DEER'S AGE?



Antlers are not horns. They are living bone structures grown and shed each year by male deer. Antler growth is affected by many factors, including the quality of habitat, available nutrition, a deer's age and its genetic background.

The number of antler points a buck has does not correlate with the buck's age. Yearling bucks have been known to grow antlers with eight or 10 points when the habitat and nutrition are good.

The spread of the antlers can offer a clue to a buck's age. Yearling bucks rarely have antlers that grow wider than its ears. A buck with antler spread well outside the end of the ears is normally a mature or older buck.

Because so many variables affect antler growth, estimating a buck's age using antler characteristics is not recommended. Using body and antler characteristics together can help place bucks into general age classes: younger, mature, and older deer.

## HOW OLD ARE THESE DEER?



A. \_\_\_ Years.



B. \_\_\_ Years.



C. \_\_\_ Years.

To find out how well you guessed, see the answers in the right margin!

(PHOTO CREDIT: Gee, K. L., S. L. Webb, and J. H. Holman. 2014. Accuracy and implications of visually estimating age of male white-tailed deer using physical characteristics from photographs. Wildlife Society Bulletin 38:96-102.)

SCORE  
YOUR  
BUCK!



Some hunters are interested in using antler scores to help them make harvest decisions. Software created at the Mississippi State University Deer Lab allows accurate scoring of a buck's antlers by using a game camera photo of the buck. For details about Buckscore, go online to [Buckscore.com](http://Buckscore.com).



[BUCKSCORE.com](http://BUCKSCORE.com)

**HUNTERS IN THE KNOW ... LET YOUNG BUCKS GROW!**

DEER MANAGEMENT IS MORE THAN ANTLERLESS HARVEST



[wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com)

ANSWER: Each one of the deer shown are the same age! They all are 3.5 years old! Photographs of 4, wild, 3.5-year-old male white-tailed deer (of known-age status) showing variation in physical development, all deer were photographed during January in south-central Oklahoma. All deer were captured as fawns or yearlings, so age was known during later photographic recaptures by reading ear tag numbers. Photos taken at bait stations in conjunction with an infrared triggered camera survey. Supplemental feed and/or food plots were not available except during surveys.