WHITETAIL DEER
BY JAY LESSER

The Boone and Crockett Club recognizes two categories of whitetail deer. The larger and the more familiar to most of us is the common whitetail, which is found in Mexico, all but a handful of states in the United States, and in many parts of Canada. The other is the Coues’ deer, a small-bodied whitetail with correspondingly smaller antlers that is found in the deserts and deciduous woodlands of southwestern New Mexico, Arizona, and northwestern Mexico. No part of the Coues’ deer’s current range is inhabited by the larger whitetail, thus separating the two subspecies.

The first thing you will notice about a large whitetail buck’s rack is the overall height and width, followed by the number of points, and mass. When assessing a potential trophy’s score, we need to look at the lengths of the main beams, lengths of the points, the inside spread of the main beams, and the mass or circumference of the main beams at four locations.

These things can be quickly evaluated in the field with a few simple calculations. To do this we need things of known sizes to visually compare the antlers to and in this case we will use the deer’s ears, eyes, and nose. While this can be an inexact science considering the range of sizes from the diminutive Coues’ deer to the bulky giants of Canada, we are going to throw out the biggest and the smallest and take an average of the most common whitetails found in the United States. The average buck, with his ears in an alert position, has an ear tip-to-tip spread of 16 inches. His ears will measure six inches from the base to the tip. The circumference of his eye is four inches, and from the center of the eye to the end of his nose should measure about eight inches. These will be our “rulers” for antler size estimation. If you are hunting in an area that traditionally produces huge-bodied deer, or if you are hunting the little Coues’ deer, you will need to adjust your “rulers” accordingly.

THE TALLY

Assuming you can get a frontal view, estimating a buck’s inside spread should be easy. Is he outside of his ear tips? If so, by how much? For example, if his main beam appears to be half an ear or three inches outside the ear tip on each side, then by adding 6 to 16 we find that he has a 22-inch spread.

Judging the length of the main beams is next. A general rule of thumb is to look for a buck whose main beams appear to extend forward as far as the tip of his nose. However, by using this criterion alone, a long-beamed buck might be passed over if you only have a side view and the buck has a wide spread and/or its antlers turn sharply in so that the main beam tips nearly touch. Also, be aware of the buck whose beams tower above its head before sweeping forward as this adds valuable inches to an otherwise average looking main beam. The actual main beam length is estimated using our ear length and eye to nose “rulers.”

Next, and to many, the most impressive features of a trophy whitetail are the number and lengths of the points on his rack. The Boone and Crockett Club defines a point on a whitetail or Coues’ deer as “any projection at least one inch long and longer than it is wide at one inch or more of length.” Since most whitetails are hunted in or
near heavy cover where there may only be seconds to assess their antlers, we need a quick way to count points.

Points may be quickly counted by assuming that an overwhelming majority of mature whitetail bucks grow a brow tine on each antler and that the main beam tip usually lies almost horizontally. This allows us to count the standing normal points G-2, G-3, G-4, etc., and quickly add that to the number 2 (brow tine and beam tip). With this method you can quickly determine that a buck with two standing normal points per side is a 4x4 or 8-pointer, and with three standing points per side he is a 5x5 or 10-pointer, and so on, with the exception of Coues’ whitetail. Nearly all the bucks that make the records book have at least five normal points per side. The length of the points can be estimated using the same “rulers” we used for the main beams.

The typical pattern of a mature whitetail’s antler development is an unbranched main beam that normally develops from three to seven (sometimes more) unbranched points per antler at roughly spaced intervals. Any other points are considered “abnormal” and their lengths are deducted from the score if the buck is scored as a typical or added to the score if it is being scored as a non-typical.

Estimating the mass or circumference measurements of the antler is where we use our deer’s four-inch eye circumference as the “ruler.” Compare the antler at H-1, H-2, etc., to the eye. How much bigger is the antler? If it were half again bigger, the circumference measurement at that point would be about six inches.

Ideally, the rack should be viewed from the front and the side especially when judging the main beams. However, this isn’t always possible and sometimes you will just have to go with your gut feeling. But beware of the rear view, as it can be deceiving. From this angle you get an exaggerated impression of the antler’s height and spread.
The most practical way to practice your field-judging skills is to estimate the score of mounted heads. Use the buck’s “rulers” to estimate the score, then check your calculations by actually measuring the rack. With a little practice, you will be surprised how close your estimates will become. One last word of advice, when the time comes to shoot, don’t bother looking at the antlers one more time. It can cause your nervous system to do strange things.

**FIELD JUDGING COUES’ WHITETAIL**

Coues’ deer are miniature, desert-dwelling cousins of the familiar whitetail. Therefore, you are looking for the same features as in whitetails, only reduced in expression. Coues’ deer antlers tend to form semi-circles, with the antler tips often pointing toward each other. Seldom will a Coues’ deer show the “wide-open” look that is fairly common in whitetails. Often, there is very little distance between the antler tips, and some may nearly touch each other. A mature Coues’ deer antler set may well look like a small whitetail set, although usually developed to a more “finished” look overall. Interestingly, the antler beams of Coues’ deer may well be nearly as thick as those on a mature whitetail.

There will be at least three well-developed points (plus beam tip) on each antler for a near-book typical Coues’ deer trophy, and the inside spread will need to be near 15 inches. The general look of the rack will be mature, with the second point on each antler being usually the longest of the side and the antler tips pointing toward each other.

A large non-typical Coues’ deer will show these qualities plus several noticeable abnormal points. Roughly, the abnormal points will need to total about 10 inches (current typical all-time records book minimum entry score is 110 and that for non-typical is 120), which means generally about three or four abnormal points on the rack.

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**MAXIMUM VS. MINIMUM**

**A COMPARISON OF TWO RECORDS- BOOK COUES’ WHITETAIL DEER**

**WORLD’S RECORD TYPICAL COUES’ WHITETAIL DEER SCORE: 144-1/8**

**TROPHY ANALYSIS**
- Mass, mass, and more mass
- 5x6 frame
- Extra long main beams – 20-2/8 and 20-5/8 inches
- Only 4-7/8 inches in symmetry deduction

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**MINIMUM ENTRY TYPICAL COUES’ WHITETAIL DEER SCORE: 104-1/8**

**TROPHY ANALYSIS**
- 5x4 frame
- Only 2-6/8 inches in symmetry deduction
- Strong G-2s and G-3s – 9-6/8 and 9-2/8 inches, respectively
- Good main beams – 16 and 15 inches
- Lacks overall mass
The definitive manual for anyone with a desire to learn the Boone and Crockett Club's world-famous big game measuring system is now available in this updated, convenient field guide that easily fits into backpacks. Inside you will find detailed instructions on how to score each of the native North American big game categories recognized by the Club, including numerous illustrations to clearly demonstrate techniques for proper measurement. Also included in this field guide are techniques for evaluating and field judging the most popular species of North American big game.

Other important sections of the field guide include:
- A chapter on general measuring techniques for native North American big game
- Scoring instructions and scorecharts for all 38 categories of North American big game recognized by the Club
- Boundary descriptions for species such as elk, blacktail deer, grizzly and Alaska brown bear, whitetail, and caribou
- Table of the quarter locations for easy reference when measuring all big game categories with horns
- A chapter on understanding the dynamics of hunting and spotting optics.

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Typical Whitetail and Coues’ Deer

(Check one): Minimum Scores

- Whitetail: 160 170
- Coues’: 100 110

### SEE OTHER SIDE FOR SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

#### Below Data (A, B, & C) Do Not Calculate in the Final Score But Are Required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Antler</td>
<td>Left Antler</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBTOTALS</td>
<td>TOTAL TO E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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#### other

- A. No. Points on Right Antler
- No. Points on Left Antler
- B. Tip to Tip Spread
- C. Greatest Spread
- D. Inside Spread of Main Beams
- Spread Credit (May Equal But Not Exceed Longer MAIN BEAM)

#### Add Together

- Spread Credit
- Exact Locality Where Killed:*
- County:
- State/Prov:
- Hunter (Legal Name):
- Date Killed:
- Column 1
- Trophy Owner (Legal Name):
- Telephone #:
- Column 2
- Trophy Owner’s Address:
- Subtotal
- Column 3
- Trophy Owner’s Email:
- Guide’s Name:
- TOTALS

#### Subtract

- Column 3

**Final Score**

Remarks (Mention Any Abnormalities or Unique Qualities):

*Geographic location (lake, mountain, river, etc.) required for trophies taken in Canada and Alaska.

Boone and Crockett Club® Official Measurer I.D. Number

Mail To: Boone and Crockett Club ■ 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801 ■ (406) 542-1888 ■ www.booneandcrockettclub.com

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It is the policy of the Boone and Crockett Club to promote the guardianship and provident management of big game and associated wildlife in North America and maintain the highest standards of fair chase and sportsmanship in all aspects of big game hunting, in order that this resource of all the people may survive and prosper in its natural habitats. Consistent with this objective, the Club supports the use and enjoyment of our wildlife heritage to the fullest extent by this and future generations.

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BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB® INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEASURING TYPICAL WHITETAIL AND COUES’ DEER

All measurements must be made with a 1/4-inch wide flexible steel tape to the nearest one-eighth of an inch. (Note: A flexible steel cable can be used to measure points and main beams only.) Enter fractional figures in eighths, without reduction. Official measurements cannot be taken until the antlers have air dried at a habitable room temperature for at least 60 days after the animal was killed. The 60-day drying period for a trophy that has been frozen or boiled begins the day it is removed from the freezer, boiling pot, or submersion in any liquid.

A. Number of Points on Each Antler: To be counted a point, the projection must be at least one inch long, with the length exceeding width at one inch or more of length. All points are measured from tip of point to nearest edge of beam as illustrated. Beam tip is counted as a point but not measured as a point. Point totals do not add into the final score.

B. Tip to Tip Spread is measured between tips of main beams. Tip to tip spread does not add into the final score.

C. Greatest Spread is measured between perpendiculars at a right angle to the center line of the skull at widest part, whether across main beams or points. Greatest spread does not add into the final score.

D. Inside Spread of Main Beams is measured at a right angle to the center line of the skull at widest point between main beams. Enter this measurement again as the Spread Credit if it is less than or equal to the length of the longer main beam; if greater, enter longer main beam length for Spread Credit.

E. Total of Lengths of all Abnormal Points: Abnormal Points are those non-typical in location (such as points originating from a point or from bottom or sides of main beam) or extra points beyond the normal pattern of points. Measure in usual manner and enter in appropriate blanks.

F. Length of Main Beam is measured from the center of the lowest outside edge of burr over the outer side to the most distant point of the main beam. The point of beginning is that point on the burr where the center line along the outer side of the beam intersects the burr, then following generally the line of the illustration.

G-1-2-3-4-5-6-7. Length of Normal Points: Normal points project from the top of the main beam. They are measured from nearest edge of main beam over outer curve to tip. Lay the tape along the outer curve of the beam so that the top edge of the tape coincides with the top edge of the beam on both sides of the point to determine the baseline for point measurements. Record point lengths in appropriate blanks.

H-1-2-3-4. Circumferences are taken as detailed in illustration for each measurement. If brow point is missing, take H-1 and H-2 at smallest place between burr and G-2. If G-4 is missing, take H-4 halfway between G-3 and tip of main beam.