



Flint's First Deer & the 'Oh No' Buck

By Steven Bridges
The Goldthwaite Eagle

Flint has been deer hunting with me since he could walk. This year, my wife and I decided it was time to let Flint, now seven years old, actually pull the trigger.

Flint's older sister Amber went on her first deer hunt when she was eight, but Flint is way more INTO hunting than Amber was at seven. Flint is into guns and watches hunting shows with me on the couch at night. He is my trapping partner at our ranch, making many trips each year to run my lines.

On each trapping trip, we stop and have target practice for Flint. Most of the time, this means shooting turtles from a tank dam. Flint thinks he is

just shooting turtles. But I'm watching and helping him improve his shooting form and trigger control.

Over the last two years, Flint has gone from scaring a few turtles to consistently hitting them, sometimes at impressive ranges. But Flint had one more shooting hurdle to jump before his mom and I would let him deer hunt. He needed to be able to shoot a deer size rifle.

Before a recent trapping trip, I slipped my .223 rifle under the truck seat in addition to the customary .22 rifle. Instead of stopping to shoot turtles, I stopped at our shooting range at the ranch. Flint looked at me funny and asked, "Dad, there aren't any turtles here."

I explained that this was a special



Pictured above is seven year-old Flint Bridges with his first deer, a nice Mills County doe.

stop for him to shoot a deer rifle. "If it goes well, your mom and I will let you start hunting deer this fall."

Flint sat down at the shooting bench and put on hearing protection. I put the rifle in front of him and showed him how to load the internal magazine and work the bolt action of my Remington VTR rifle.

I loaded four rounds into the rifle. I told him, "If you can hit the white metal target at 100 yards with three of those four rounds, you can hunt deer this fall."

My main concern was the recoil and loud report of the bigger rifle. I didn't want to scare him or make him flinch while squeezing the trigger. So, I put the emphasis on the target shooting instead of the kick and sound.

I stood right behind Flint as he lined up the scope and put his shoulder to the stock. I have to admit, I was a little nervous. Was Flint too young? Was he ready for this?

Then... Boom! The rifle fired and the metal target sounded off with a satisfying 'clang'.

I looked down at Flint to see if the shot scared him. I was met with a wide smile. Flint worked the bolt ejecting the spent round and laughed, "Daddy, I LIKE this! I REALLY LIKE this rifle!"

Flint went on to hit the metal target with all four rounds. And more importantly, he did so flashing a big smile up at me after each shot.

With this shooting practice, Flint earned himself a hunting license this fall.

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