



Big Bucks on Small Property? You Bet!

By Steven Bridges
The Goldthwaite Eagle

Good Mills County hunting properties are often selling for well over \$2,500 an acre and leasing for over \$20 per acre per year. Unless you have some seriously deep pockets in your camo pants, chances of owning or leasing a large ranch in or around Mills County are slim.

But a small ranch managed and hunted correctly can produce large, mature bucks year after year. Many of the trophy bucks in each edition of The Mills County Hunting Guide each year are taken on these smaller ranches.

Over the years, I have taken hun-

dreds of trophy photos of hunters with a buck taken from a small ranch. I invariably ask the hunters how they find success on small ranches in Mills County. I have boiled down the answers to what I call my Tiny Ranch Tips & Tricks.

Food, Water, and Cover.

If a buck has food, water and cover he won't go anywhere. On a small place, this will probably mean supplemental feeding year-round combined with one or more food plots. To keep deer close, keep the feeder full.

Another necessity is water. Deer need water every day in the summer

and about every other day in winter. So keep an open water source on your small property at all times. If a buck has to travel off your place every day or so to get a drink, he's fair game for the neighbors.

The last basic necessity that deer in general, but especially bucks, require is a thick cover sanctuary near the food sources. Place your feeders and food plots as close to bedding areas as possible on a small property. If the deer only have to travel a short distance to their feeding area, they will feel safer and stay put. Having cover close to the food source also improves the chances of seeing that mature buck in daylight hours when

hunting season begins.

Remember, though, you must stay out of those deer sanctuaries! Bucks especially need to know they can come to your property, enter a sanctuary, and be totally safe. No shed hunting in the spring, no scouting and no ATV riding at all except to retrieve a dead buck or follow a wounded one.

The Ladies.

Why do they let ladies into a bar free and charge the guys a \$20 cover? It is the same reason that you should take great care to keep the

See the next page ...

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