



# PTSD & Deer Camp

**By Steven Bridges  
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PTSD when it comes to deer hunting is Pre-Trip Stress Syndrome. It's the lack of sleep leading up to the day a hunter leaves for camp. It's the obsessive compulsive list making of all the gear he needs to take with him. It's making sure your ATV is in working order and loading it up on the trailer, with at least one tire flat but more than likely two flat tires.

PTSD is the frenzied monkeying with the ATV to get it to start, before

being forced to hand it off to the local mechanic, promising several hundreds of dollars if he can "just have it done by Friday," and the mechanic's smile when he knows he has you where he wants you. It's hoping it's nothing too serious, and that the ATV will just make it through the weekend.

It's the many calls and group chats with the hunting buddies, which if overheard by a therapist, sounds more like group therapy than hunting preparations.

Johnny will tell his friends, "Guys, I can't go this weekend. My wife's grandmother turns 86 and I can't miss it. I just can't go ... my life is over ... I might as well end it all now."

The guys will pat him on the back and tell him, "it'll be okay," but Johnny will reply, "I've seen this 12-pointer in my deer cam every day for the last week, coming to the feeder at 8 a.m. like clockwork. What do I do?!"

Johnny is reassured by his buddies that there will be other hunts, but all the while they make a note to themselves, and internally they each hatch a similar plan to get the other guys totally wasted the first night at camp so that they can be the one who get to the blind early the next morning to get Johnny's 12-point. All is fair in love, war, and deer hunting.

Another day passes, and they dream of that 12-pointer in addition to all the things that can go wrong between now and getting to camp. They think about road work, job assignments, family obligations, the 47-point check list that has to be completed before leaving town. They plod through their honey-do lists before they can leave, and it's the one and only time they envy their divorced friend, who was cleaned out of everything but his deer camp. Sitting up in bed at 2 a.m., they lean over to glance at their pretty wives, and mutter, "huh."

The day has finally arrived and about four guys are in the truck, everything is loaded up and ready to go. Bobby's phone rings, and his wife tells him Junior has sore throat and fever. She's called to tell him he needs to come home, because she can't go to soccer games all weekend and take care of their sick son at the same time. Bobby manufactures some static noise and tells his wife he can't hear her and that his phone is cutting out before hanging it up and turning it off.

Bobby's friends don't know if they should smile or what, and Bobby tells the driver to hit the gas and go before his wife thinks to start tracking his phone. Now a speeding ticket in the middle of nowhere amid the speed traps set up by the DPS troopers waiting for the overloaded deer hunters is among their worries.

At long last — after a flat on the trailer, 14 phone calls, two speeding tickets, all that guilt built up, all that stress of getting to the camp, wide eyed and jacked up on coffee — the hunters make it to camp and pile out of the vehicle. One kisses the ground and thanks God they made it. They're so happy to be there and start unloading, before deciding, "Aww, screw it. Just unload the beer."

They build a fire and drink until the wee hours of the morning, passing out or falling into their bunks in the ratty old RV they'd never stay in otherwise. Each one of them cracks a big smile, because the only known cure for this sort of PTSD is actually being at deer camp. They dream sweet dreams of the 12-point at Johnny's stand, and wonder who will get up first, but somehow it's just not as big a deal as it was the days before. Just being at camp is 90 percent of the battle.

The hunters wake up at 11 a.m., make a pot of coffee and a big breakfast. They'll lament that they missed the morning hunt, and decide they might as well start drinking instead. They have a great time, and come back to the city rested and relaxed, and it won't be until those red brake lights come on as they hit the traffic on the first loop going back into the city that the PTSD returns.

All that stress and worry comes back and they'll wonder if they can make it until the next hunting trip. They know they have to make it, though, because Johnny's 12-point is still out there.



## 'Ole Bad Breath' Bags a Big Mills County Buck



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At *The Goldthwaite Eagle*, we don't go around publishing malicious nicknames in the pages of the newspaper or any of our publications. But in this case, we simply couldn't resist. So here it is...

'Ole Bad Breath' bagged a nice eight-point Whitetail buck in Mills County on Opening Day of deer season. The buck was entered in



the Chamber Opening Day Big Buck Contest where it scored over 111 Boone & Crockett points.

No, 'Ole Bad Breath' is not Gary Farley's nickname. It is Gary's nickname for his favorite deer rifle.

"I was just going to shoot a doe this morning," said Gary. "But when this buck walked out, well..."

Congratulations Gary and 'Ole Bad Breath'.