

## Small Place, Big Bucks - Continued...

does healthy and happy on your tiny ranch. Hunting near does during the rut will bring the big bucks out of the cover. So, keep your does as comfortable as possible.

### DO NOT DISTURB.

I have seen places as small as 15 acres produce massive bucks. But it takes a little stealth. On large properties, disturbed deer have plenty of other places to move and feel secure. Not so on small areas. If you disturb a buck on a small property, he will leave and he might not be back for months, if ever.

Don't set up an RV and a big camp on a tiny ranch. Every deer within a mile knows you are there to hunt. True, a few does and immature bucks might still show up at the feeder in the morning, but not the big guy. He took off when you unlocked the gate. My advice is to stay in town. Don't let the deer know you are coming. When you drive to your hunting area, approach your property from down wind if possible. Ease your truck door closed and be in hunting mode the second you step out of the truck.

If you have a year-round lease and use the property for summer picnics, fishing or ATV riding, etc., then you are lowering your ability to hold big bucks. The idea is to create a property where the bigger bucks feel safe all

year round. The bucks then will come there in the hunting season from neighboring area properties, because it is on your land where they feel totally secure. This might not fit your family needs, but it's a must if you want to hold big bucks.

When scouting, stay on the fringe of the property as much as possible. Erect some "observation stands" on the perimeter of your property and work from the perimeter in. Never drive any vehicles or ATVs on the property. You can do so on the perimeter, but never the interior (except for work on food plots, and even then, keep it reduced as much as possible). Do not place any tree stands within 100 yards of the sanctuaries you have created. Hunt the fringe of your property, and only travel into the interior of your property to blood-trail your trophy.

### NEIGHBORS.

If hunters on neighboring properties harvest any buck that moves, your bucks just aren't going to be able to grow up. Is there anything you can do to get and keep good bucks on your property? The best thing you can do to keep your bucks alive a few more years is to call around and find out who hunts the areas around your small lease or a ranch you own.

The Mills Central Appraisal District (325) 648-2253 has contact information for landowners' neighbors. Honestly discuss your hunting goals and preferences with your neighbors. I have often seen neighbors come together and agree on harvest standards. I have even seen neighbors agree not to harvest specific bucks that roam between two places.

Some of these agreements even formalize into Wildlife Management Associations. One very successful local program is the Simms

Creek Wildlife Association in Mills County. Learn more by going to [www.simmscreekwma.org](http://www.simmscreekwma.org).

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Small properties offer some special challenges for the deer hunter, but trophies are taken each year by the hunters who take a little extra time to follow some basic trophy deer management principles. Good luck this season!



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