



# Alex Goes on His First Deer Hunt

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*Note: Uncle Tom isn't **exactly** my uncle. We figured out that he he is actually my second cousin-in-law. But Uncle Tom just sounds better to me than Second Cousin-in-Law Tom.*

My uncle Tom Graves of Red Oak, Texas called me last fall and asked to bring his grandson Alex to Mills County for his first deer hunt. Of course, I jumped at the chance.

"Alex is a little too young to pull the trigger," said Tom. "But he was old enough to experience the thrill of the hunt."

Tom and I talked several times over the phone planning the hunt. A little bit of planning goes a long way when taking a kid on his first deer hunt. Here are some of the questions I asked Tom...

How old is Alex? Eight.

Hunting experience. None. This was to be his first hunt of any kind. Although Alex has been fishing quite a few times, so he has some outdoor experience.

Is this a hunt for Alex to shoot a deer? No. Tom was to pull the trigger.

Has he seen a deer field dressed? No. We will explain the process to prepare Alex for it. We will be ready to answer his questions before, during and after.

What snacks does Alex like? Cheetos. Having snacks in the deer stand makes a big difference when taking a kid hunting. Be prepared and have plenty. This is no time to skimp. But shy away from sugary foods. Wrangling a kid on a sug-



**Alex shows off the spike buck that he and his grandfather harvested on Alex's first deer hunt.**



**Alex takes the wheel of the Ranger under the supervision of Uncle Steve.**

ar high inside a deer stand is no fun for anyone!

Do you want to hunt for a buck or a doe? Tom said he just wanted venison for the freezer. So a doe or a spike would be fine.

NOTE: Kids get cold easy. No amount of clothing can keep a kid warm and happy in really cold temperatures. So we set the hunt up for early in the hunting season and prayed for mild temperatures. If you are forced to take a kid during cold weather, bring a blanket and some hand warmers. Kids love hand warmers!

When the day finally arrived, we were greeted with t-shirt weather and a perfect wind for hunting in our elevated box blind. The blind is set adjacent to a deer food plot with a feeder 125 yards away for added draw.

The weather was nice enough for us to park the truck at the barn and drive our Ranger to the blind. We even let Alex get behind the wheel for a bit. He loved the excitement and power of driving the vehicle for a while. I just made sure to sit behind him and work the gas and break pedals. I know how boys' brains work and I don't have a death wish!

We made sure to get to the ranch early. We checked some of my trap line on the way to the deer stand. No luck there. But we did find a nice pair of shed antlers a big ten point buck lost last spring. Alex loved them.

We showed him how to rattle the antlers together as a deer call. He banged them together with gusto! I think he a little disappointed when no deer ran right up the Ranger after he rattled. Tom and I got a good chuckle out of his rattling.

Alex is a smart kid. He peppered me constantly with questions. I did my best answer them as they came. I always say that if the kid is asking, he is learning. If that is the metric, Alex learned a lot during this hunt.

We made it to the blind nice and early, before any deer started moving. I dropped Tom and Alex off at the blind and then drove the Ranger off to stow it out of sight in the brush. I hiked back and joined the duo up in the blind.

Alex was busy checking out the blind. He was opening and closing the windows when I crawled into the blind. It is good to get into the blind early with a kid so he has some time to settle down before the deer start moving.

Later, Alex made great fun out of gathering all the spent rifle rounds out of the corners of the blind and lining them up according to size on the window ledge. I showed him how to read the caliber on the base of the brass. I'm not sure he understood .30-06 vs. 300 Win. Mag. But if I'm honest with myself, I'm not entirely sure either.

Tom and I spent at least 30 minutes showing Alex Tom's rifle, range finder, binoculars and grunt call. Tom let Alex play with everything for a while. He even let Alex look out a window through the scope of his unloaded deer rifle. We giggled as Alex whispered, "Pew... Pew," from behind the sights. Some things are timeless.

As the day turned to evening, things settled down in the deer stand. I broke out the Cheetos to keep Alex still. Snacks are priceless in the deer stand.

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