

## **Can Culling Bucks Lead to Genetic Change on Large Acreages?**

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We designed a 10-year buck culling study to help clarify results managers can expect from various types of buck culling practices. The study is being conducted on the Comanche Ranch in Maverick County, Texas. Bucks are captured at random on 3 areas of the ranch by helicopter and net gun, aged, and measured for Boone and Crockett (B&C) score. Bucks meeting culling criteria are sacrificed, and the meat donated to worthy users. Bucks not meeting the culling criteria are released. On one area the following bucks are culled: yearlings with less than 6 points, 2-year olds with less than 8 points, 3- and 4-year olds with 8 points or less, and 5-year olds and older with a gross B&C score of less than 145. On another area, all yearlings and 2-year olds are released, and the older deer are culled by the same criteria as above. Finally, the third area serves as a control and all bucks captured are released. We are also capturing does.

After 2 years, 2,757 deer have been caught, including recaptures. In addition to the culling study, we are collecting management-relevant data from captured deer by age class, treatment area, and supplemental feed type (no feed, protein pellets, or cottonseed), including (1) live weights for bucks and does, (2) buck weight loss from pre- to post-rut, (3) lactation rates, and (4) average gross B&C score.

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