

Late Breaking News From the Trophy Front

The Records of North American Big Game Committee Implements New Changes

New Minimums for Mule & Columbia Blacktail Deer

By RANDY BYERS

The heavy antlered buck picked his way along the basalt covered slope in the sheltered canyon of the central Idaho river drainage. He was headed toward an outcrop shaded by a few scattered mountain mahogany bushes. The bedding site afforded a commanding view of the canyon as it fell away below him. He settled in just as the morning thermals began their upward shift. On a typical day, the mountain monarch would remain there undisturbed as he surveyed his domain.

Three hours later the two hunters slowly slid into position. They had spotted the buck early that morning as he headed toward his daytime retreat. While they had been unable to watch him select his secretive bedding location, experience told them he would be somewhere in the rimrock bluffs. The hunters had approached the canyon from above and had carefully dissected it with their binoculars.

Quietly one said, "I see an antler!" The buck was found and they planned their stalk.

Now they were 150 yards away just below the ridge line separating them from the trophy. Slowly one slid out the last few yards. The cross hairs of the scope settled on the buck. Seconds later a shot rang out and echoed down the canyon. The hunt was over — clean kill, a trophy buck.

The two now scrambled the last few yards. "Wow, look at that one, you got yourself a Booner, George!"

A buck of a lifetime. The hunters sat and admired the trophy for a while. They drank some water, relived the stalk. Pictures were taken and then they sat down to work. The buck was caped, the meat bagged and secured to back packs and the long arduous trek back to camp began.

At camp, they once again discussed the stalk, the shot, and the buck — but mostly the buck.

"George do you really think he will go 195?"

"Dam he should; he's got real good height and must be at least 28 inches on the inside. About the only thing wrong with him is that extra point up there on top. Yep, I think he will make it."

Three months later the buck was officially scored at 191-2/8. While eligible for the Awards book, the buck fell just shy of the minimum for listing in the all-time Records of North American Big Game. A buck of a lifetime.

Many knowledgeable trophy hunters consider the 195 minimum for mule deer one of the hardest standards to exceed in the Boone & Crockett Club's records program. Three years ago a proposal was made to the Club's Records Committee to lower this minimum. Obviously changes to minimum scores are not undertaken without a good deal of thought and study. Data supporting the proposed change needed to be gathered and a case made for the change.

One related factor prompting this recommended change was a relative imbalance in the number of Columbia blacktail deer being entered into the Club's records relative to mule deer. Given the much larger range of the mule deer and the corresponding larger number of hunters, one would expect more mule deer than Columbia blacktail entries. This, however, was not the case.

TABLE 1
Number of Boone & Crockett Entries

	AWARDS		ALL-TIME	
	20TH	21ST	9TH	10TH
BLACKTAIL	95	101	438	604
MULE DEER	69	80	378	456

As shown in Table 1, in the 20th Awards period there were 38% more blacktail entries than mule deer; in the 21st Awards period there were 26% more. In

the 9th edition of the all-time Records book, there were 16% more blacktail than mule deer and 32% more in the 10th edition. The Awards minimums are 120 and 185 respectively; the all-time Records minimums are 130 and 195.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the relative numbers of entries into each category into the Bowhunting Big Game Records of North America published by the Pope and Young Club. The data is based on the entries in the 4th edition (through December 1992). Note that 32% of the Pope & Young entries meet the B&C awards minimums and 16% meet the B&C all-time minimum for blacktail while for mule deer the values are only 3% and less than 1% respectively. Despite there being over four times as many mule deer as blacktail in the archery records, six times as many blacktail qualified for Boone & Crockett as did mule deer.

TABLE 2
Number of Pope & Young Entries

	Awards	All-Time	Total P&Y
Blacktail	100	48	309
% of total	32%	16%	(min 90)
Mule deer	42	8	1283
% of total	3%	<1%	(min 145)

Two factors may account for this disparity in the number of mule deer and Columbia blacktail deer entries. First, the mule deer minimums are relatively high and second, the Columbia blacktail minimums appear to be relatively low when compared to the mule deer minimums in terms of the number of entries for each. The Boone and Crockett Club has several ways to rectify this difference -- lowering the mule deer minimums and raising the Columbia blacktail deer minimums or lowering the mule deer minimums and not changing the Columbia blacktail deer minimums. Table 3 shows the possible impacts on entries caused by lowering the mule deer minimums. A five point reduction in the minimums for mule deer does not significantly distort the numbers of entries based upon information in the last three awards books.

TABLE 3
Impact of lowering mule deer
minimums (180/190)
Boone & Crockett Entries

	AWARDS	ALL-TIME
MULE DEER	NA	456
21ST AWARDS		14
20TH AWARDS		6
19TH AWARDS		1
TOTAL		477

Table 4 illustrates the corresponding data from the Pope and Young Records and shows the percentage of Pope and Young's current entries that would qualify for Boone and Crockett using the 180/190 minimums. About 7% and 2% respectively of the mule deer trophies would qualify for Boone and Crockett at the 180/190 entry scores. Interestingly, this corresponds directly with the 7% and 3% for typical whitetail entries at 160/170 in the Pope and Young Records.

TABLE 4

Pope & Young Entries (Total-1283)

ENTRY SCORE	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
180	119	7%
190	20	2%

Table 5 shows the possible impacts of raising the Columbia blacktail deer minimums. One could argue that the values should be 135/145 based on this data and the Pope and Young data for Columbia blacktail.

TABLE 5

Impact of Raising Blacktail Minimum
Boone and Crockett

	21ST AWARDS	10TH ALL-TIME	LOW/%	HIGH/%
125/135	94	438	65/21%	26/8%
130/140	89	301	48/16%	15/5%
135/145	60	168	26/8%	8/3%

At the December meeting of the Records Committee of the Boone & Crockett Club, two actions were taken. First, the typical mule deer minimums were lowered to 180/190 for the Awards and all-time records books, respectively. This change went into effect immediately; hence entries are being accepted into the 22nd Awards program at these values. Second, consideration is being given to raising the Columbia blacktail minimums to 130/140 for the Awards and all-time

records books respectively. If, after further study, this proposed change is approved it would go into effect January 1, 1995, after the close of the 22nd awards period. Official measurers and associates who have comments on the proposed change in the Columbia blacktail deer minimums are encouraged to submit their comments in writing to Jack Reneau at the Club Headquarters prior to June 1, 1994.

Length of Main Beam - Deer

From time to time discussions have arisen on the proper procedure for taking the length of main beam on deer. Individual measurers may have slightly different approaches. The disparity in procedure usually concerns where to start at the burr and how to proceed from there to the G-2 location. From G-2 on, most measurers follow the same line. This disparity is more pronounced in measuring mule deer than whitetail deer.

The score form states that, "The length of Main Beam is measured from lowest outside edge of burr over outer curve to the tip of main beam. The point of beginning is that point on the burr where the center line along the outer curve of the beam intersects the burr, then following generally the line of the illustration." The narrative in the Boone & Crockett Club's Measuring and Scoring North American Big Game Trophies is also somewhat vague (see page 49 of this manual by Nesbitt & Wright). It states to start from the burr, above the eye, and to proceed to the beam tip, along the outer curve. It is not explicit. Likewise, the sketches and the photo on page 50 of the measurer's manual do not resolve the problem. Neither sketch shows the portion of the measurement in question. The photo is misleading in that it appears that the edge of the cable may be hooked at the rear of the beam on the burr. That is NOT where we begin.

Two primary questions are: Where to start on the burr; and how to proceed along outer curve to G-2?

The sketches on the score forms for deer provide a basis for developing a better description of this procedure. They show the starting location as the center of the burr on the outside of the beam as viewed from the side. This position is generally directly above the eye socket. The outside center of the burr location is consistent with the procedures covered in the Club's measurer training courses.

At the December 1993 meeting the Records Committee approved the following wording describing the correct procedure:

The measurement begins at the point where the center line along the outer side of the beam intersects the burr. This point is above and slightly off center of the eye socket. (See figure A) To determine this starting point, view the antlers from the side lining up the far side with the near side. Find the middle of the burr as the antlers are viewed from this angle (i.e. the center of the burr on the outer side). It is neither at the lower front edge nor at the rear of the beam but rather at the outside center of the burr.

The next problem is how to get from that point to G-2. The score form instructions say to follow the outer curve. However, early versions of this system discuss staying on the outer side of the antler. This difference has created some disagreement about the proper line of measurement. The "outer side" wording matches well with the score form illustrations. One has to swing upward and backward to get to the center of the beam at G-2, otherwise one will be on bottom of the beam at G-2. However if one stays along the outer side of the beam, as viewed from the side, up to the center of the beam at G-2, this swing will be accomplished naturally.

Thus the Records Committee also approved the following wording describing this approach:

Once the starting location on the burr is noted, the length of main beam measurement proceeds along the outer side of the beam towards the middle of the beam below the G-2 point as indicated on the diagram on the score form. (See figure B) From that location, it proceeds on out to the beam tip over the outer curve of the antler. In general, this line should stay near the middle of the beam. This line can be measured from either the tip to the burr or the burr to the tip. The actual measurement is taken by use of the flexible steel tape, marking the antler with a lead pencil and swinging the tape as necessary, then resuming the same tape measurement.

The narrative in the Measurer's Manual would then continue with the paragraph on page 49 that begins "A round, flexible steel cable..."

While the above page references to the measurer's manual are for the section on measuring mule deer, a similar procedure would be employed for all deer, elk and caribou measurements.

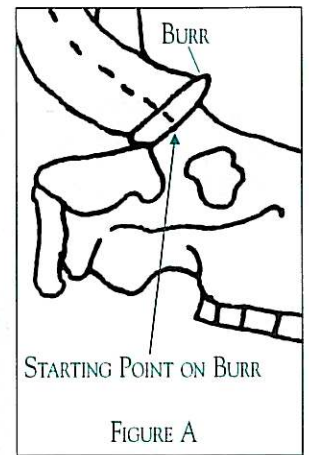


FIGURE A

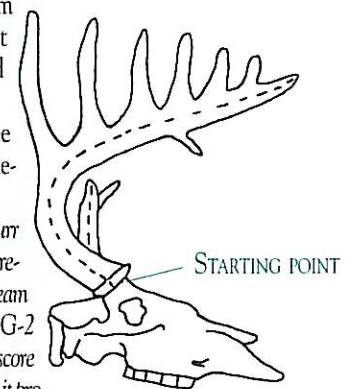


FIGURE B

THE DASHED LINE INDICATES THE LINE OF MEASUREMENT FOR THE LENGTH OF THE MAIN BEAM FOR DEER.