

After hunting for five days in prime trophy buck country famous for large mule deer, my dad and I were extremely discouraged. Both of us had drawn coveted tags to hunt a renowned area in Utah and expected to be able to pick and choose how large of a buck we wanted. Based upon all the stories that we heard, we believed all we had to do was drive up to the area, get out of our vehicle and look over the herd, choose an animal with a 30-inch spread and shoot it. Nothing could have been further from the truth! Instead, we found that all of the prime hunting area was locked up and private, and landowners were charging over \$10,000 to hunt on their property. We were left to hunt the public land among the cattle that landowners had obtained grazing permits for so they could lease their land to the hunter who could afford the required fee.

Nevertheless, we hunted hard for five days straight without even seeing a buck larger than a three point. Still determined, we decided to hunt the lower country in hopes of finding a buck that may have made an early start to his traditional winter range. With less cover and more open space, we felt our chances might be better than fighting cattle and other hunters for a stray buck that might have wandered off of its protected private sanctuary.

About 10:00 a.m., we decided to walk down a canyon that provided a good vantage point from side to side. No sooner had we begun, than we saw a doe cross our path about 150 yards in front of us and move up the left side of the hill at a fast pace. The hill provided effective cover and was fairly steep. Another doe followed the first one, then another and another. We didn't expect to see a buck with does at this early point in the season and, as a result, were unprepared for what we saw following the fourth animal. We knew it was big by the size of its body and the length of its tines, but we only got a quick side view

as he moved through an opening at the bottom of the canyon.

I decided to take a chance because of the luck that we were having and try to get him. I put a cartridge in the chamber of my Remington .25-06 and picked an opening on the side of the mountain that I believed the deer might move through during their effort to get over the top. Sure enough, the first doe moved quickly through the opening and back into cover. I knew that I only had one quick shot and had to make it count. The second doe appeared, then the third, and then the fourth. I was nervous because they were moving so fast. However, having practiced shooting before the season and the fact that I was very familiar with my firearm, I was confident that I could make a good shot on the back if he entered the opening.

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Seconds after the fourth doe vanished, this magnificent animal appeared. I was taken at the size of its body and had to quickly dismiss my emotions so as not to miss my shot. I centered the cross hairs of my scope on his front shoulders and squeezed off my first shot. The bullet shattered its front shoulder and exploded his heart. He quickly went down after staggering for only a moment. There was no need for a second shot.

My first emotion was somewhat somber and respectful after having witnessed such a majestic animal going down. However, my feelings were quickly replaced with excitement as I approached it after the vigorous climb up the hill. Its body was absolutely magnificent and it had heavy horns with long, high tines. It weighed over 250 pounds and its horns grossed 198-3/8 points, and netted 184-1/8 points, just over the necessary



requirements of 180 points to make the B&C Club's Awards Program. Its coloring was absolutely beautiful and his neck measured over 24 inches wide. This was a buck interested in the call of nature much sooner than the traditional rutting period.

Our excitement was diminished over the next few days after not seeing another buck. My father, however, was not too terribly disappointed at not getting an animal like mine. You see, he has a monster hanging in his barber shop in Roosevelt, Utah, that he shot years earlier. This beauty has a spread of over 34 inches wide and makes my buck look like his junior (my dad likes to remind me that I am his junior also.) Both bucks now hang side by side, junior next to senior, as a reminder of a father and son's hunting experience in the hills of Utah.

GREG P. RICHENS, B&C ASSOCIATE, WITH HIS TYPICAL MULE DEER THAT SCORES 184-2/8 POINTS. THE BUCK WAS TAKEN IN GARFIELD COUNTY, UTAH, IN THE FALL OF 1995.

# HUNTING UTAH'S PUBLIC LAND