



Boring Brown

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KERMIT THE FROG laments in his famous song that "It's not easy being green." Well, try being boring brown. If Kermit thought he blended in, he didn't know very many deer. White-tailed deer are notorious for hiding in plain sight. It starts from birth and continues throughout their life. They, like many species, have a magnificent coat that is often overlooked or taken for granted by those who admire them. That is until something goes awry.

We all get the occasional blemish. It is a right of passage through our teen years. As adults, our sparse use of sunscreen can leave us with various specks and spots. Some of us are even afflicted with (dare I say) warts. Well, we can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Deer get warts, too, sort of.

Remember that boring brown coat that no one pays any attention to. Well, stick a cutaneous fibroma on it and see what happens. All of a sudden that deer becomes the talk of the town. Did you see that deer? It's got something growing on it. Will it spread? Should we quarantine the town? Round up the kids, bring in the dog, impose a curfew!

Relax, it's just a wart. Cutaneous fibromas are commonly known as deer warts and are caused by a virus. This virus causes hairless tumors to grow on the skin. These tumors vary in size from ¼-inch to more than eight inches in diameter. The smooth black to gray hairless skin that covers the tumors can have a roughened surface, and the word most often used to describe their appearance is "grotesque." Transmission of the virus that causes cutaneous fibromas is thought to occur through biting insects and possibly by direct contact with various contaminated materials that might scratch the skin. But fear not, the virus poses no known threat to people or domestic animals. That's a relief.

Thankfully, fibromas are merely surface blemishes. While they are, to say the least, unsightly, they cause concern to a deer only when they interfere with sight, respiration, eating or walking. In fact, they usually cause more anxiety among the general public than the deer itself. But like most blemishes, these, too, fade into memory. Without other complicating factors, fibromas regress after about two months in most deer. As a result, no wart remover is necessary.

So when you consider the alternative, being boring brown isn't so bad. And deer find it's rather easy being brown.