



## **Profiling**

*By J. T. Fleegle  
PGC Wildlife Biologist*

THE DEFINITION of profiling is the act or process of extrapolating information about a person based on known traits or tendencies; specifically: the act of suspecting or targeting a person on the basis of observed characteristics or behavior. For example, a married 30-something female, like me, is much less of an insurance risk than a single male teen. As a result, my rates are lower. Profiling occurs in business, law enforcement and deer. That's right—deer.

There is nothing wrong with profiling if there is reliable data to back it up. Teen drivers are four times more likely than older drivers to crash, and they account for 30 percent of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among males. It's hard to argue with those numbers. How does this relate to deer, you ask? How often have you or someone you know judged a buck based solely on his antlers?

Of all the grand and wonderful things about a deer, the one that gets the most attention grows from its head. The never-ending chatter about antlers is enough to drive any sane person completely mad, but there seems to be an insatiable appetite for them. Most, if not all, conversations about antlers revolve around their size.

Myth #3: The size of a buck's first set of antlers is an indication of his future potential. Many people assume that a young deer with spikes is "inferior" to one with a basket rack. That's a lot of pressure to be putting on a deer's first attempt at "manhood" in the deer world. It's hard to grow antlers when you are still trying to build bones, especially if what you have to eat isn't up to par. However, this doesn't stop those who don't have to grow antlers from judging those that do.

Yearling antler measurements, such as antler beam diameter, are often used as a measure of herd health, as they are sensitive to environmental conditions. But this fact has yet to deter any profiling. So, in 2008, some research was done looking specifically at yearling antler size and how it related to their "adult" antlers. After eight years, 12 different study sites and hundreds of deer, what was found? By the time a white-tailed male reaches 4.5 years of age, there is no difference in antler measurements regardless of the size of their first set of antlers as a yearling.

Perhaps this will bring justice to the falsely accused.