

**IV. A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON THE NUMBER OF
TINES IN THE ANTLERS OF THE WHITE-TAIL
DEER AS CORRELATED WITH AGE**

Ed. D. Crabb

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A common "thumb rule," according to many hunters, for determining the age of a deer is that a deer is as many years old as there are points on his antlers. The purpose of this paper is to show that there is no correlation between age and number of points.

We know that the condition of the mammalian teeth, especially with regard to the shedding of the deciduous or milk teeth and the appearance of the permanent dentition, bears definite relations to the age of the mammal and that this relation is of fairly reliable character; therefore, if one is to determine the age of a deer by the number of tines on its antlers, there must be correlation between (1) shedding of its deciduous teeth and condition of its permanent dentition, (2) the number of tines on the antlers, (3) and between the number of tines and the age of the animal. The writer has for some years been compiling data with regard to this correlation.

Care has been taken in compiling this data to compare only specimens that were killed in the same locality, so that they should have had essentially the same feeding conditions; consequently the teeth should have been subjected to the same relative amount of wear. Eight comparable cases are noted here. In order to meet these requirements it is necessary to compare the eight specimens in twos.

In two individuals, designated as "A" and "B" the antlers are practically the same as regards size and number of points, but the dental batteries are different. That in "A" shows a much more worn condition than that in "B." The age of "A" as

shown by the teeth is distinctly greater than that of "B"; the antlers in this case do not appear as a criterion of age.

The comparison of "C" with "D" shows that "D" has eight tines and a badly worn dental battery, while "C" has twelve tines and his dental battery is not badly worn. "C" is actually younger, but has four more tines than "D."

In the case of "E" and "F" the number of tines is the same, i. e., three on either beam on each animal's head, but the premolars of "E" are deciduous while the entire dental battery of "F" is permanent.

A spike "G," has deciduous premolars, first and second molars in use and third just erupting; while the dental battery of "H" is almost identical with that of "G," but "H" has three tines on either beam.

It will be seen from the foregoing comparisons of the number of tines and of dental batteries that no correlation exists between these two sets of facts, and therefore, there can scarcely be a correlation of the number of tines with the age of a white-tail deer.