

## outdoors

# Deer hunting: a fever that comes from genes

By Robert G. Woodring  
special writer

As autumn's amber hues drift to the forest floor, a new color strikes a dark contrast to the ashen November skies. This blaze-orange hue swarms into the woods where it can be seen for miles across brown, barren fields.

The color is hunter's orange. The people who wear it have a fever.

It's an all-consuming disease which overwhelms many men — and some women — and can be traced back through genes and chromosomes for generations.

A body can survive 10 months in tranquility and never be bothered by the disease. But as Nov. 15 approaches, the Michigan deer hunter again falls victim to this malady.

THE FEVER starts under a harvest moon and with the northern wind. It strikes harder when the hunter wanders down to his workshop. There, amidst cleaning patches, brass carriages, brushes and Hoppe's No. 9 solvent, the hunter strokes his 30-30 or bolt-action 30-06.

The fever resembles the bug one suffers when new cars are introduced. This fever, however, is steeped in heritage.

The deer hunter doesn't need to spend a lot of money. Sure, you have to get the annual license and new bullets, but there's nothing special otherwise beyond outdoors clothing and camping equipment.

Most hunters do break down and buy something new for the season. Actually, nothing fits more comfortably than oiled and worn leather high-tops or 10-year-old 20-weight wool pants.

AFTER HOURS or days of futile plying, he may sight a deer.

For one of every 10 successful Michi-

gan hunters (sometimes one of every seven), it will be a buck. Viewed from 100 yards away, it is majestic and muscular. It appears as large as big game animals are supposed to be.

By some fluke, the buck doesn't detect the hunter. It continues to browse. The hunter feels the pangs of "buck fever." His pulse quickens, his eyes water profusely. It's hard to see and breathe, and harder to keep the gun-sight centered on the spot just behind the giant buck's shoulder.

The hunter squeezes the trigger. The rifle jumps to life and a force of 2,000-feet-per-second pushes the tender shoulder, but the hunter holds. His eyes, involuntarily closed at the explosion, reopen. He doesn't see the buck. It is gone.

His breath returns, his heartbeat slows. Flipping on the safety, the hunter strolls out to the field where he last saw the deer. It was further away than he thought.

He searches parched and matted weeds. Sand burrs and devil's pitchforks cling to his wool pant legs as he beats about.

In anguish, telling himself "I know it was too good to be true," the hunter is ready to return to his blind. That's when he spots it.

THE MAJESTIC buck is prostrate in the sand and weeds. Its huge rack is a mere three points, and he seems only a little bigger than a Great Dane.

Sighing as he punches a vent hole in the deer's chest, the hunter gasps and grabs his nose but continues spilling open his venison.

After the buck is tied onto his car's fender, the hunter drives home as the dusky sun sinks in the west. His fever is gone.

For another year.



## Deer hunters help sought

The Department of Natural Resources is asking deer hunters to help track animals by bringing their dead deer or its head to the Mayberry State Park, during the next few weeks.

The check station at the park, which is off of Beck Road between Seven and Eight Mile roads in Northville, will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays,

through the end of the deer hunting season. Hunters who can't make those times are asked to call 349-8390.

According to DNR spokesman Tim Payne, the DNR wants to question hunters about where they killed the deer, what day it was shot and they also want to examine the dead animal to gather more biological information about the wildlife.

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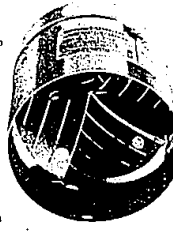
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