



NORTHWESTERN WHITE-TAILED DEER  
CANADA, Saskatchewan  
SEPTEMBER 2016  
MECHISLAV KLIMOVICH



GOLD AWARD  
385 5/8



*Odocoileus virginianus*

Ciervo de cola blanca (Sp), Virginiahirsch (G), Cerf à queue blanche (F). Also called **Virginia deer**.

**DESCRIPTION** (male) Shoulder height 36-40 inches (91-102 cm). Weight 100-180 pounds (50-82 kg).

Females are considerably smaller.

The whitetail is a graceful, medium-sized deer with a long, slender neck, a narrow face, fairly large ears, and long, slim legs. The summer coat is reddish-brown in color and very soft-more like fur than hair. Winter coat is gray or grayish-brown. There is a white stripe around the nose and chin, white markings near the eyes, and a white throat patch. Underparts, inside of legs, and rump are white. The large, bushy tail can be as long as 18 inches (46 cm). It is brown on top with white edges and all white underneath, with erectile hairs that flare out when the tail is raised as an alarm signal. The main antler beams grow from the back of the head and curve forward and inward over the face.

Typical antlers will have several short, unbranched tines that grow up from the top of each beam. In addition, a single brow tine (eye-guard) commonly occurs on each antler, but is not always present. Non-typical tines are those that grow from the side or bottom of the main beam, or from the burr, or from another tine. Additional brow tines (more than one to an antler) are also non-typical. Antlers in New Zealand are smaller and thinner than those in North America. Typically, they have 2-4 points on each side, including beam tip and brow tine. The longest antlers recorded in New Zealand measured 25-3/4 inches (65.4 cm) and were from a nine-pointer taken on Stewart Island in 1974. A 22-pointer with 25-inch (63.5-cm) beams was taken in 1936 in the Greenstone Valley on the South Island.

**BEHAVIOR** Lives in small groups of 2-3, typically a doe and her offspring or several young males in loose association.

Trophy bucks are solitary except during the rut, which takes place late April-May. Fawns are born late October to mid-November.

Mostly active during early morning and evening, but feeds almost continually in winter if undisturbed. Becomes nocturnal under hunting pressure. Mainly a browser, favoring such foods as fivefinger, stinkwood, supplejack shoots and koromiko. Also eats certain seaweeds, particularly the common bull kelp on Stewart Island. A

creature of habit with a small home range, using the same trails, bedding and feeding areas for years if unmolested. Hearing and eyesight are good, sense of smell is excellent. Exceptionally wary and alert. When alarmed, may stomp its front hoofs and snort before bounding off with tail erect, exposing the white underside. Very quick on its feet, bounding in long leaps, changing direction often and ducking and weaving. An excellent swimmer.

**DISTRIBUTION** Only in New Zealand, where there are two populations: one on South Island near the head of Lake Wakatipu, the other in the coastal forests of Stewart Island. Enclosed white-tail deer are also found on some private estates.

**REMARKS** In 1901, two pairs of whitetails were liberated in the Takaka Valley in the northern part of South Island, New Zealand. There seems to be no record of where these animals were obtained. In 1905, 22 northern woodland whitetails (*borealis* subspecies) that had been captured in New Hampshire were shipped from the United States, and the 19 that survived the voyage were released in New Zealand: one in the Takaka Valley to join the four previous imports, nine in the Rees Valley at the head of Lake Wakatipu, and nine near Port Pegasus on Stewart Island. The Takaka Valley deer died out, but the other two introductions were successful.

Whitetail bucks are cunning and wary, and are often the standard by which other big game species are judged as to hunting difficulty.

