

Flying Z Ranch

Doe vs Fawn Identification

Nothing is more heartbreaking than walking up to the doe you shot to find out it's a button buck fawn. It takes practice and diligence to avoid making this mistake. It's always better to pass on a shot rather than rush a shot on a deer you haven't been able to positively ID as a mature doe. Extra scrutiny is warranted early morning or late afternoon in low light conditions.

Some simple things to look for:

Nose: Short nose & forehead - 12oz Coke bottle = **FAWN**

Long nose & forehead - 20oz water bottle = **DOE**



Body size and snout length differences distinguish the adult doe (right) from her fawn.



"Nubbin" buck (left) shows developing antler bases and flattened head. Yearling doe is slightly larger and has a more rounded head.

Judging Antlerless Deer (does and fawns)

		<p>Fawns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short nose and forehead • Ears appear larger in comparison to its head • Head similar in shape to an 8-oz. drink bottle 		<p>Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer nose and forehead • Head similar in shape to a 16-oz. drink bottle 	<p>Separating Buck Fawns from Doe Fawns</p> <p>Buck Fawn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for presence of developing antlers • Head appears flatter and less rounded <p>Doe Fawn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No developing antlers • Head appears rounder 	<p>Helpful Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never harvest a lone antlerless deer. Often these are buck fawns. Wait until several antlerless deer are present before making a harvest decision. • Never harvest antlerless deer in low light, at long distances, or where a positive identification cannot be made. • Always use binoculars when determining the sex and age of antlerless deer. • Always give the animal the benefit of the doubt if there is any uncertainty regarding sex or age.
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Body profile:

Square shape / no brisket / front shoulder looks larger than hind quarters = **FAWN** (think a brief case)

Rectangular shape / noticeable brisket / sizeable hind quarters = **DOE** (think a large piece of luggage)

<p>Fawns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have short, square bodies (look like a "briefcase" from a distance) • Have short necks and less muscle development • Rarely have swaying backs or sagging bellies 	<p>Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have larger, rectangular-shaped bodies (look like a "suitcase" from a distance) • Have long necks • Often have swaying backs or sagging bellies
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Body from the front: Narrow thin frame = **FAWN**

Wider body when seen from the front = **DOE**

Ears: Big ears compared to size of head = **FAWN**
 Small ears relative to the overall head = **DOE**

Eyes: Distance between eye to eye similar to distance from eye to nose = **FAWN**
 Distance between eye to eye much shorter than the distance from eye to nose = **DOE**

Tarsal glands: Snowy white = **FAWN**
 Light golden brown with some white = **DOE**

Doe vs Fawn comparison table:

Age Physique	Face, Ears, Eyes, Nose	Belly Brisket	Tarsal	Antlers	Gait	Body Structure
Fawn Button Buck	Ears - appear too long Nose - looks too short Legs - look long/skinny Eyes – look too big	No brisket or muscle definition.	Small Snowy White	BB Fawn buttons & flat head; Doe Fawn rounded head.	Frisky	Square Body Shape in Profile. Front shoulders look larger than hind quarters.
Mature Doe	Nose - long bottle shape Ears - look small Eyes – look small	Common to have defined brisket.	Light Golden Brown		Cautious Lead Deer	Wide Body Rectangular Profile with Sizeable hind qtr

Some simple rules & traits to look for:


- 1- Avoid shooting a lone doe – its very difficult to discern the age of a single antlerless deer without something to compare it to. Fawns, especially during the rut, when they’ve been pushed away by their mothers, quite often show up at feeders by themselves.
- 2- The first deer to show up is often a button buck. Look for the buttons and remember rule #1.
- 3- If there are only 2 doe, look closely at the bigger one for buttons.....it could be a button buck and the second is his smaller doe fawn sister. Then look at the other traits describe above.
- 4- Fawns seem to “frolic” often “running around like little kids” while mature doe tend to walk and move around in a steady “with a purpose” gait.
- 5- Fawns are seemingly unaware of their surroundings while the mature doe is typically cautious always looking around for predators.
- 6- Be extra diligent when shooting in the low light conditions in the early morning or evenings.

Typical Fawn Behavior

- Playful, naive, inquisitive
- *Buck Fawn*: more aggressive, and tends to be the first antlerless deer seen

Typical Adult Behavior

- Hold ears back displaying aggressive behavior
- Stand on hind legs and “flail” subordinate deer (as seen in the photo)
- Often the lead deer when a group of antlerless are traveling together.



Credit the following for the images & photos used above:

- > *A Hunter’s Guide to Aging & Judging Live White-Tailed Deer in the Southeast.* Mississippi State University Extension Services.
- > *Technique for Aging Live Deer.* University of Missouri Extension Services.
- > *Field Judging Live White-Tailed Buck & Does.* QDMA & Alabama Wildlife Foundation.

Some examples from the field:



Button Buck fawn on left & Doe fawn on right. Note lack of color on the doe-fawns tarsal glands



Doe fawn (left), Button Buck fawn (middle) & mature doe right



2-1/2 yr old doe. Note on left color of tarsal glands. Noticeable brisket (right photo)
Distance from eye to nose is much greater than the distance between eyes.



Button buck fawn (left) and doe fawn (right). Notice short snout/nose and white tarsal glands.