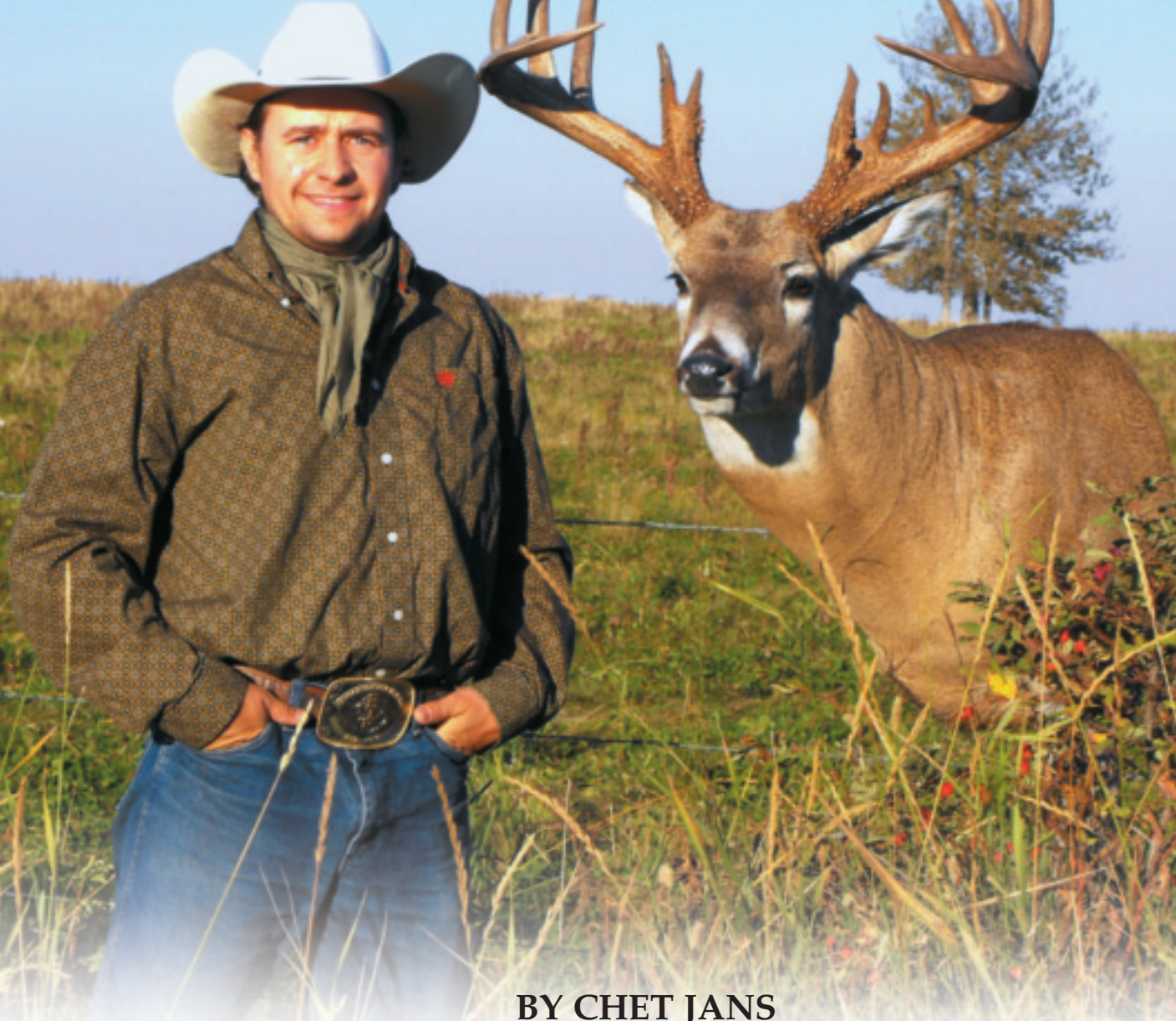


BEATING the ODDS



BY CHET JANS

Chet Jans of Groundbirch, British Columbia, with the big whitetail he took in October of 2012. The 7x9 has an inside spread of 21 3/8 inches. Longest main beam is 25 inches even with brow-tines of 4 3/8 and 5 inches. All the G-2s and G-3s are well over 10 inches. The net typical score is 169 7/8 and adding the 19 2/8 abnormalities that it grew the final score is 189 1/8 non-typical points.

The decision to move north away from our families was not an easy one, but it was the most obvious choice my wife and I ever made. With high valleys, open range, excellent growing seasons, pristine rivers, affordable land, and more wild sheep-

filled country than any one person can rightly comprehend, we loaded up our purebred Simmental herd and headed north up the Cowboy Trail. The prime motivator for the shift in lifestyle from central Alberta to north east British Columbia was to settle

down and start a family. We wanted to grow our cattle genetics and brand; Fallen Timber Farms, and bring the advantages our breed of cattle exudes to local ranchers. The immediately apparent advantage on the hunting front was that I was now a BC resident and able to hunt the sheep I could only dream of in Alberta. I resigned myself to the fact that my chance at a big whitetail would likely never happen as the area we bought into is not notorious for big bucks. This minor sacrifice was merely a second thought in exchange for the mountain (literally) of BC hunting opportunities I would so graciously accept in exchange for the move.

watch a 200" typical whitetail for several hours during the course of summer and fall as he grazed on alfalfa. My hopes soared for the following year. Moving into November, I was graced with the opportunity to witness the aforementioned buck pursue a doe at 85 yards and I knew that if I could manage the predators and poachers, I would have a chance at a once in a lifetime deer.

Predation is a major issue here, with many Cattlemen losing significant numbers of their stock each year. Wild game is also severely pressured year round. When herds of elk show up, the chilling howls of sizable wolf packs are typically not far off.

The number of wolves is truly indescribable unless you've lived with them. A late January chinook in 2012 really had me puzzled regarding the wolf population. My wife and I were out bedding newborn calves in the corrals around midday when I looked out the tractor window and saw a big old wolf sitting not 50 yards away staring at the pen of calves enjoying the sun. Absolutely shocked, I ran for the house to grab a rifle in plain sight to the woolly old bugger, fully expecting him to take off. Well the Simmental calves must have looked pretty good because that dog didn't move an inch and I dropped him where he sat. This wolf was an old mature male that had likely been displaced in his pack. He weighed up at 170lbs even! My hopes of any wild animals making winters in this region were



Chet with his wife and young son. It should be mentioned that this British Columbia whitetail has a 175 6/8 gross typical frame before deductions.

The first 6 months of residency took me through general hunting seasons in both AB and BC as a spectator, as I had not resided in BC for the minimum time before hunting season began and had forfeited my Alberta residency through the move. Being an avid bow hunter over the years had taught me to be patient and enjoy the hunts, not for the chance to release an arrow, but rather for the opportunity to observe wildlife that the vast majority of people will never be fortunate enough to see. Accordingly, during the first season of scouting (mostly on our new ranch), I quickly realized that the genetics for world class deer existed in this small pocket of animals in the foot hills of the BC mountain range. With great excitement I was able to

diminished to say the least, not to mention the other pressures that come with being a world class whitetail like the one that graced my alfalfa fields the fall before. Wolves aside, I also quickly learned that even in largely uninhabited places like Northern BC, poachers and trespassers are prevalent. The tactics of these folks are similar everywhere and seeing absolute disrespect for the shot and abandoned wildlife, along with total disregard for landowner rights is disheartening to say the least. I am an absolute conservationist and pass this mentality on to any new hunter as well as old veterans, yet I couldn't help but wonder what the odds of survival were for the local whitetail population.

I searched relentlessly for the sheds of the 200" deer I named 'Grand Daddy' during the winter and spring months, but could never verify that the old boy I witnessed had made the winter. In early June I located a heavy velvet deer, but so early in the antler growing season I could not be certain if it was him. The bow season in our management unit is short for whitetails, and I thought it necessary to make an appearance every night in a certain hotspot I had identified on one of our quarters. I had found a 160" whitetail a few days prior to the bow season and felt that since 'Grand Daddy' was likely no longer alive, a bow harvest on a 160 class



Chet and his son with an old warrior whitetail that he took in 2013.

Here is the huge wolf that was ready to eat one of Chet's new-born calves.



whitetail would be exceptional. I hunted hard during the short season, and on the last day I spot and stalked a rack that had me shaking. At a mere 30 yards I had a buck with a velvet cluster of antler that resembled a poorly spooled roll of barbed wire. Never had I ever seen mass like that on a single antler. It was most certainly not Grand Daddy as this deer was not aged nearly as much and sported tremendous abnormal growth. Additionally, there was a typical whitetail tagging along that would also net in B&C.

I nocked an arrow and slowly positioned myself for a body shot on the big non-typical buck. I was hunkered down on a ridge covered in willows, alfalfa and tall clover so the ground cover was perfect. With the wind in my face and the 2 mega bucks in front of me, I felt certain that a golden opportunity was upon me. The lesser typical buck was perfectly broadside, but his bigger non-typical buddy had me mesmerized. Unfortunately the larger buck was quartered too sharply away already so I knew I would have to be patient and hope that he would follow the trail back up towards me. As I quietly started to draw my bow in anticipation for a shot, the buck, in

a sixth sense manner, slowly walked directly away without being alarmed and disappeared into the thick brush. I was utterly devastated and felt that my chance was gone. Let me tell you how long a night is when you replay this scene knowing you could have arrowed a 170"-180" typical whitetail but got greedy on a bigger buck. I knew I could have attempted a shot on the non-typical buck, but I did the ethical thing and let him walk. Early the next morning, I was back to the same spot but could not locate either deer. At this point I decided to refocus on spending the available time I had outdoors enjoying whatever critters were about and carried on with my season of calling elk and moose, and glassing sheep.

On one particularly busy day in early October, I finished up with my day's work having only minutes of daylight to spare and headed off to an adjoining field where I had last encountered the non-typical whitetail in bow season. My intent was to unwind after a long day and if fortunate enough, perhaps harvest an elk coming out to feed at last light. On the walk up to the field, my mind wandered to all of the previous stories I had heard and read regarding big deer and the sudden appearance of them in front of lucky hunters. I thought to myself, "It just takes good timing".

With rifle and elk reed in hand I arrived at my hilltop look-out where I could glass the field. One-by-one the elk started pouring out of the timber. As I scanned persistently for a good bull, my gaze shifted to a buck that had exited the trees with

some cow elk. At the distance I was at, the side view he gave me had me thinking it was the 160 class deer I had seen before bow season, so I dismissed him and turned back to the elk. With no bulls worthy of harvest in the field I again was drawn to the buck grazing with the cow elk. He looked heavy and dark. I was a good 600 yards away so I decided to close the gap and get a better look. A hundred yards into my stalk the buck looked down the field in my direction. I quickly realized that this was no 160 buck; this was the non-typical I had at 30yards in bow season. Without hesitation I laid the bipod down, and held steady on the majestic buck. With a squeeze of the trigger I knew I had connected with an absolute giant. Upon my arrival to this deer I was completely overwhelmed. In a word, I was elated. My persistence in pursuit of a big whitetail paid off in a rather unusual circumstance from what I had anticipated. Patience and pure dedication to the conservation of all wildlife rewarded me tenfold in this pursuit.

Although 'Grand Daddy' has disappeared, his genetics have lived on. It is my hope that through proper management of land and resources as well as dedication to the cessation of poaching and predation, perhaps not just myself but all ethical outdoorsmen will enjoy animals of this caliber for generations to come. I would like to personally thank Merv Webber with New Horizon Taxidermy for the exceptional mount and fast turnaround on this deer. His artistic abilities are extraordinary and did this northern Wallhanger justice.