



# The Buck Growl: A New Deer Vocalization?

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The MAD Buck Growl began shipping to retailers in Mid-July and has quickly become the hottest Deer Call in the country. This new deer sound, identified and duplicated by Flambeau's Mark Drury, has been called the "first new deer vocalization in 20 years". The Buck Growl has had such a meteoric introduction this summer that other companies are rushing to copy this amazing discovery. Shipping complete with a DVD that includes the story behind the development of the call and great "deer woods" footage, the Buck Growl is as hot as the results you will get on your next hunt. For information on the retailer nearest you, please call 1-800-457-5252 or e-mail us at [consumer@flambeauoutdoors.com](mailto:consumer@flambeauoutdoors.com).

Please read the attached article below by Bobby Worthington in the July Issue of North American Whitetail Magazine.

## The Buck Growl: A New Deer Vocalization?

Think you've heard every sound there is to hear in the deer woods?

Well, hold on! This amazing vocalization may be your ticket to a real monster in 2006.

By Bobby Worthington

For me and several other avid whitetail hunters I know, the 2005 season may well go down in history as being the year of the "buck growl." The sound -- a sort of growl-roar-bellow -- is hard to describe on paper (the closest I can come is to say that it sounds similar to the deep growl of a large dog with his head in a barrel), but its significance may be far-reaching.



*Buck Growler call from M.A.D.® Calls*

Until December 2005, I had never witnessed (at least, not knowingly) a buck make a sound like that. However, on Dec. 7, I watched and listened in amazement as a 2 1/2-year-old 10-pointer made this very sound. In retrospect, I realized I had been approached several times in years past by old-time deer hunters who asked me if I had ever heard a buck "barking." Several other times while hunting during the rut, I had heard strange sounds in the woods that probably were in fact buck growls, but at the time I didn't know what those sounds were.

In November 2005, a month before I witnessed a buck making the sound for myself, I was having supper with two of my good friends, Larry and Jack Arms of Knoxville, Tennessee. Both brothers are avid whitetail hunters who were guiding for Hadley Creek Outfitters in Pike County, Illinois. That evening, Jack mentioned having heard an unusual sound that he assumed a buck had made. At the time, I thought he was referring to what

I call a "dominant-buck bawl" -- that is, a loud, forceful, drawn-out grunt -- and we left it at that.

Two nights later, however, Jack told me he had again heard this strange sound while out hunting. He said he had been watching a couple of 1 1/2-year-old bucks chasing a doe when all at once he heard a very loud and forceful "growl" or roar coming from some thick cover near the chase scene. The sound was repeated every few minutes until dark.

Two days later I received a phone call from Jack telling me about some amazing video footage that another Hadley Creek guide and avid trophy hunter had taken. That gentleman, Rich Baugh, also happens to be a good friend of mine who lives in East Tennessee. Here is his account of what he captured on videotape on the morning of Nov. 14, 2005.

### AN AMAZING DRAMA

"The night before I filmed the event, nine or 10 bowhunters were sitting around the lodge talking about our hunt that day," Rich begins. "Jack Arms and another hunter had both heard a strange sound in the woods that they described as somewhere between a deer grunting, a cow groaning, a lion roaring, and a deep-throated dog barking. Naturally, all of the other hunters, including me, were very skeptical. We thought they were crazy.

"The next morning (Nov. 14), I headed to my stand to try to shoot a doe or two because I had already filled my buck tag. At around 8 a.m., a mature doe came by my stand and I put a fatal arrow into her. She ran about 45 yards and expired in the edge of a field. Within a few minutes a 140-class 11-pointer walked up to the dead doe.

"Apparently the doe had been in heat, because after smelling her, the buck worked himself into a frenzy. He flipped her over with his antlers, obviously trying to make her stand up. He then started making a series of loud 'growling' sounds that I had never heard before. My buddy, who was a good 500 yards away, heard the sound each time the buck made it.

"I turned on my video camera and began taping the buck. He made the growling sound a total of seven times, all the while



*A smiling Mark Drury shows off a 5 1/2-year-old "old-timer" that came storming in to his position after the hunter used his buck growl call. The entire event was captured on video.*

goring the doe and pushing her around with his antlers. As he was making this sound, other bucks began to appear. Incredibly, a total of 15 different bucks came within sight of my stand. I'm convinced that they were drawn to the sounds the buck had made.

"After a few minutes, a dominant 8-pointer appeared on the scene. He quickly ran off the 11-pointer and walked up to the dead doe with a totally different disposition toward her. Instead of abusing her, as the other buck had done, he began licking her and gently rubbing her with his foot.

"Most of the bucks that had been drawn to the call kept hanging around and showed no intentions of leaving. I eventually had to exit my tree so I could take possession of my doe. Several of the bucks had gotten so worked up that I walked very close to them before they reluctantly left the area. Needless to say, this was the most exciting morning I ever spent in the woods."

During the days following Rich's incredible experience on Nov. 14, at least six other hunters at Hadley Creek Outfitters described hearing the deer growl. Each case involved mature bucks and estrous does.

## **A STARTLING REVELATION**

On Dec. 7, I was back home in Tennessee bowhunting on a friend's farm. I was in a tree stand watching an overgrown field when a mature 8-pointer and the doe he was tending walked by my stand at about 45 yards. Suddenly a 2 1/2-year-old 10-pointer appeared on the scene. He walked directly under my tree stand and stood staring at the pair. All at once he began running full speed toward the hot doe. I believe he was attempting to separate the two deer. Each time his feet hit the ground, he made a loud, forceful growl. It had that "barrel" sound as if it were coming from deep inside his chest.

As I stood on my platform, I realized that this sound was something totally new to me. I wondered: Could it be the same sound that everyone had talked about so much back in Illinois? Ironically, that same day I received a video in the mail of the unbelievable footage that Rich Baugh had taken on Nov. 14. As

I watched the footage that night, I was astonished to hear the same sound I had heard earlier in the day while hunting.

## **The Buck Growl: A New Deer Vocalization?**

I later got additional copies of the video from Rich and sent them to two close friends -- whitetail legends Roger Rothhaar and Gene Wensel. As you might imagine, Roger and Gene were amazed and intrigued at the events Rich had captured on tape. Both hunters had heard similar sounds a few times before in years past, but neither man had connected those sounds to a whitetail buck, because they had never actually witnessed a buck make the sound. Gene had always attributed the growling sound to that of a distant cow.

I also asked well-known whitetail biologist Dr. Grant Woods about his experience with the buck growl. Grant told me that he believes he had heard the sound only two times before. The first occurred during the late '90s when two dominant bucks were competing over a hot doe.

The second time occurred in early 2000. And similar to Rich Baugh's experience, it, too, involved a dead doe believed to have been in heat. Grant said that shortly after he shot the doe, a buck appeared on the scene and began pushing her around and trying to lift her up with his antlers (very similar to what Rich had captured on tape). Amazingly, the buck even tried to mount the dead doe as she lay on the ground. The buck soon worked himself into such a frenzy that he began to make a distinct and loud growling sound.

## **AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE**

In November 2004, Jeff and Chris Propst were in Missouri filming a whitetail hunt for Drury Outdoors' "Dream Season" TV show.

A doe in heat had been shot by a neighbor and had fallen close to the stand that Jeff and Chris were in. Within minutes a 2 1/2-year-old buck approached the dead doe. After sniffing the doe, the buck began to get excited. He gored the doe with his antlers and tried to pick her up, obviously wanting her to stand for him. Suddenly another buck appeared. The first buck ran at the intruder and began to make a loud growling sound. It was obvious that the buck making the sound was at a heightened emotional state triggered by the doe in heat.

When the video team returned to Iowa with the footage, everyone was amazed. No one at Drury Outdoors had ever heard the "buck growl" vocalization before. But realizing its great potential, and knowing how big the "snort-wheeze" call had been in recent years, Mark Drury immediately set about trying to duplicate the sound. After considerable trial and error, a prototype call similar to a grunt tube was ready for testing during the 2005-2006 hunting season.

With the opening of the 2005 season, Drury Outdoors had two goals in mind. The first was to try to capture more bucks making the growling sound on video. The second was to field test the new call.

On Oct. 25, 2005, Terry Drury and Matt Clump were hunting a stand overlooking a Biologic food plot. Suddenly a giant 170-class buck appeared. As the buck approached what was obviously a hot doe, he made several distinct growling sounds.

Terry and Matt were elated! They had captured a buck growling on video.

A few days later on Oct. 30, Drury Outdoors cameras again captured the same sound. This time it involved a 150-class buck that was obviously cruising for hot does. As the buck came up over a rise and spotted a group of does, he let out a long growl.

Then, unbelievably, on Halloween day, Drury Outdoors filmed yet another buck growling. This incident occurred when two bucks paired off for a fight. Against incredible odds, in less than a week the Drury team had captured on video a sound that no member of their team had ever heard before November 2004. Now they knew they were really onto something!

## THE ULTIMATE TEST

With so much footage in the can, Mark Drury's confidence in the new call began to rise. Now it was time to actually put it to the test. On Nov 1, Mark was out hunting when he saw a mature buck cruising off in the distance. As soon as Mark imitated the buck growl on his prototype call, the buck turned and walked to within eight yards of his tree. Mark wasted little time in sending a well-placed arrow on its way, shooting possibly the first buck ever called in with any type of "buck growl" call.

Two days later on Nov. 3, Mark was again in a tree stand when he heard two bucks crash horns some distance away. A few minutes later he performed a short rattling sequence and began calling with his M.A.D. Buck Growler. Almost immediately a 5 1/2-year-old brute came off the ridge and walked within a few yards of the waiting hunter. The end result was the same as it had been two days earlier. This scene was repeated several times during the 2005 season as the prototype call was field-tested.

By total coincidence, several weeks after Rich videoed the amazing scene in Illinois on Nov. 14, 2005, he contacted Mark Drury and sent him a copy of the video. This only reinforced Mark's belief in his new call.

## PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Now that the buck growl vocalization is a reality, four important questions come to mind. First, why were so many bucks heard making this sound in 2004 and 2005 when the sound was virtually unknown before those years? Second, what is a buck saying when he makes a growl? Third, do does ever make this sound? And last, what does this new sound mean to today's deer hunters?

Starting with question No. 1, it's hardly possible that bucks have just learned how to growl in the past two years. Perhaps one reason this new sound has recently come to light, however, is because more hunters are now taking to the woods with video cameras and capturing some amazing sights and sounds on videotape.

**These bucks were definitely at the height of emotional frustration, trying to get the does to stand for them while trying to keep other bucks at bay.**

While we often catch ourselves wondering, "Did I really see or hear what I thought I did?" there can be little question about what we witnessed or heard if it was captured on videotape. Not only can we rewind it and study it over and over again, we can also share it with our friends. In short, the deer growl probably has been around as long as other deer vocalizations, but we just never recognized it for what it was.

Once this call gets out on the market, I believe that a lot more hunters will begin to recognize the sound as a distinct deer vocalization. Also as more and more hunters get exposed to the growling sound, their ears will become more attuned to listen for it out in the woods. The same thing happened when the first grunt calls were introduced in the 1980s and when the first snort-wheeze calls came out in the late '90s.

Another important factor may be responsible for the reason that this important vocalization has just recently come to light. That is, the more we manage deer populations for mature bucks and the closer the buck:doe ratio gets, the more likely we are to see bucks make this sound. The buck growl is definitely made by bucks in a high state of arousal, and the call is definitely an aggressive sound tied closely to breeding and rutting activities.

Dr. Grant Woods echoes this idea. He believes bucks have always had the capability of making this sound and probably have made it to a lesser degree in the past, but they haven't had as much of a reason to make it in years past as they do now because the whitetail population is much more intensely managed today.

The answers to the next two questions can only be conjecture on my part. From the several recorded instances in which bucks were observed standing over dead estrous does, it's easy to see that the growl call was made at a time when the buck was at a very high state of agitation and excitement. These bucks were definitely at the height of emotional frustration, trying to get the does to stand for them while trying to keep other bucks at bay. When you listen to a full-fledged buck growl even on tape, it's obvious that the buck making the sound has put all of his emotional energy into the vocalization.

Do does also make this vocalization? None have yet been recorded. A highly agitated doe would probably make a more highpitched sound anyway. So with this in mind, anytime I hear a forceful deep growl in the deer woods I will assume it has been made by a buck.

What does this sound mean to today's deer hunter? When it's imitated correctly, I believe the buck growl can be a very successful call to lure in bucks, particularly mature bucks. Rich Baugh's videotape clearly shows that other bucks are highly attracted to the sound. While one or two of the bucks that Rich videoed may have been trailing the hot doe, several others came in from different directions after the 11-pointer began making the sound. Mark Drury says it best in his instructional DVD: "During that time just before, during or just after peak rutting dates, this call can be a great tool in the hunter's arsenal, especially when combined with other calling techniques like rattling and grunting."

It is apparent that the bucks recorded on video making this sound were not trying to call in other bucks. However, other

bucks were certainly attracted to the call, probably because they knew that it involved an estrous doe. And unlike the snort-wheeze call that is an aggressive buck vocalization intended to intimidate other bucks (and also works unbelievably well in calling in mature bucks), the buck growl seems to be used when a buck is operating at a much higher emotional level, as mentioned.

Because it is more of a rutting call, the buck growl may well be more effective at luring in mature bucks at certain times of the year than a grunt call. While the buck grunt is often associated with a hot doe, that's not always the case. Young bucks sometimes use this vocalization because they have been run out of their home territory after their mothers began to cycle. I think some of these young outcasts are simply walking around in the woods grunting in an effort to contact other deer.

Since the buck growl has not yet been exploited by hunters to any real degree, it should prove to be very effective, at least for a few years to come. During the past 15 to 20 years, countless bucks have been fooled by hunters using grunt calls, only to sneak in and get a nose full of human scent or get shot at. As a result, they've become suspicious of this call. Many of the mature bucks I call to these days scarcely look my way.

What does this vocalization mean in the grand scheme of things? What new and exciting aspect of the whitetail's life is waiting for us to discover it just around the corner? I cannot answer these questions, and in a way, I'm glad. For now, when I enter the deer woods this season I'll be content to simply tune my ears to a different sound -- the mighty buck growl!

*(Editor's Note: The M.A.D. Buck Growler is available for purchase. An instructional DVD is included with the call, along with Rich Baugh's dramatic footage taken on Nov. 14, 2005, and other great footage taken by Drury Outdoors cameras. To order an autographed copy of Bobby Worthington's great book, Bowhunting Trophy Whitetails -- An Advanced Approach To Taking Mature Bucks, visit the author's Web site at [www.bobbyworthington.com](http://www.bobbyworthington.com).)*