



Guide to Hunting in Germany

08 – HUNTABLE GAME (*WILDTIERE*)

08a – RED DEER (*ROTWILD*)



Breeding season (<i>Brunftzeit</i>):	September - October
Gestation period:	33-34 weeks
Young are born:	May-June (normally one)
Teeth:	34 (at 32 months)
2 eyeteeth in upper jaw are called:	<i>Grandeln</i>
Males:	<i>Hirsch, Rothirsch</i>
Females:	<i>Tier, Hirschkuh, Stuck</i>
Young female:	<i>Kalb</i>
Young male:	<i>Hirschkalb</i>
Herd:	<i>Rudel</i>



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Red deer are the largest huntable game in Germany. The color of Red deer ranges from reddish-brown in the summer (May to October) to grayish-brown in the winter.

The stag may have a marked collar of long hair around the neck (*Mähne, Brunftkragen*). The female Red deer does not have this so-called rutting collar or mane. Newborn calves have a chestnut-brown body with white spots that disappear completely before the first winter.

Only stags have antlers. Like all antlers, these are shed annually.

Red Deer can be found in many Regions all over Germany, large populations live in the Lüneburger Heide, in Harz, Eifel, in Hessen and the Taunus region, as well as parts of the Schwarzwald and Pfälzer Wald. In Bavaria the main areas for Red deer are the Spessart, Rhön and Fichtelgebirge, the Bayerische Wald and the alpine region.

Popular hunting areas for U.S. Forces hunters include the military training areas of Grafenwöhr and Hohenfels in northern Bavaria.



Record size *Hirsch*, harvested in Grafenwöhr 2005, 9.5kg antler weight, uneven 20ender. Note shed antlers from previous year on the ground.



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Red deer prefer deep forests with watering places. These deer travel great distances in search of food and shelter during the breeding season. In the mountain areas, Red deer graze up to the timberline zone in summer and move into the sheltered valleys in winter.

Today many areas in the mountains have fenced in areas (*Wintergatter*) with feeding stations. The fence is opened in late fall when the Red deer is moving to the feeding stations and kept close during the winter. This is done to prevent damage to trees, as Red deer peel off bark on trees when no other food is available.

In spring the fenced-in Red deer is released again. Some of these feeding stations are popular tourist attractions.



Shortly after a mud bath, notice the more mature *Hirsch* in the background



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Red deer live in herds (*Rudel*), especially during the winter. Herds of females, calves, and young stags (*Kahlwildrudel*) are led by the leading cow (*Leittier*).

Older stags stay in small groups separate from the *Kahlwildrudel*.

Very old stags are often loners, and they only visit the *Kahlwildrudel* during *Brunft*.



Kahlwildrudel in Grafenwoehr



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Kahlwildrudel in Grafenwoehr

Like Wild boar, Red deer bathe in muddy waters for protection against gnats and other insects.

Young tree stands serve as shelter and hiding places during the day, while old stands, clear cut areas, and field serve as feeding and breeding places.

In Germany, an average mature stag may weigh 300 pounds and grow to a shoulder height of 4 to 5 feet and a length of almost 7 feet.

Females are considerable smaller and weigh 140 to 160 pounds, with corresponding proportions.

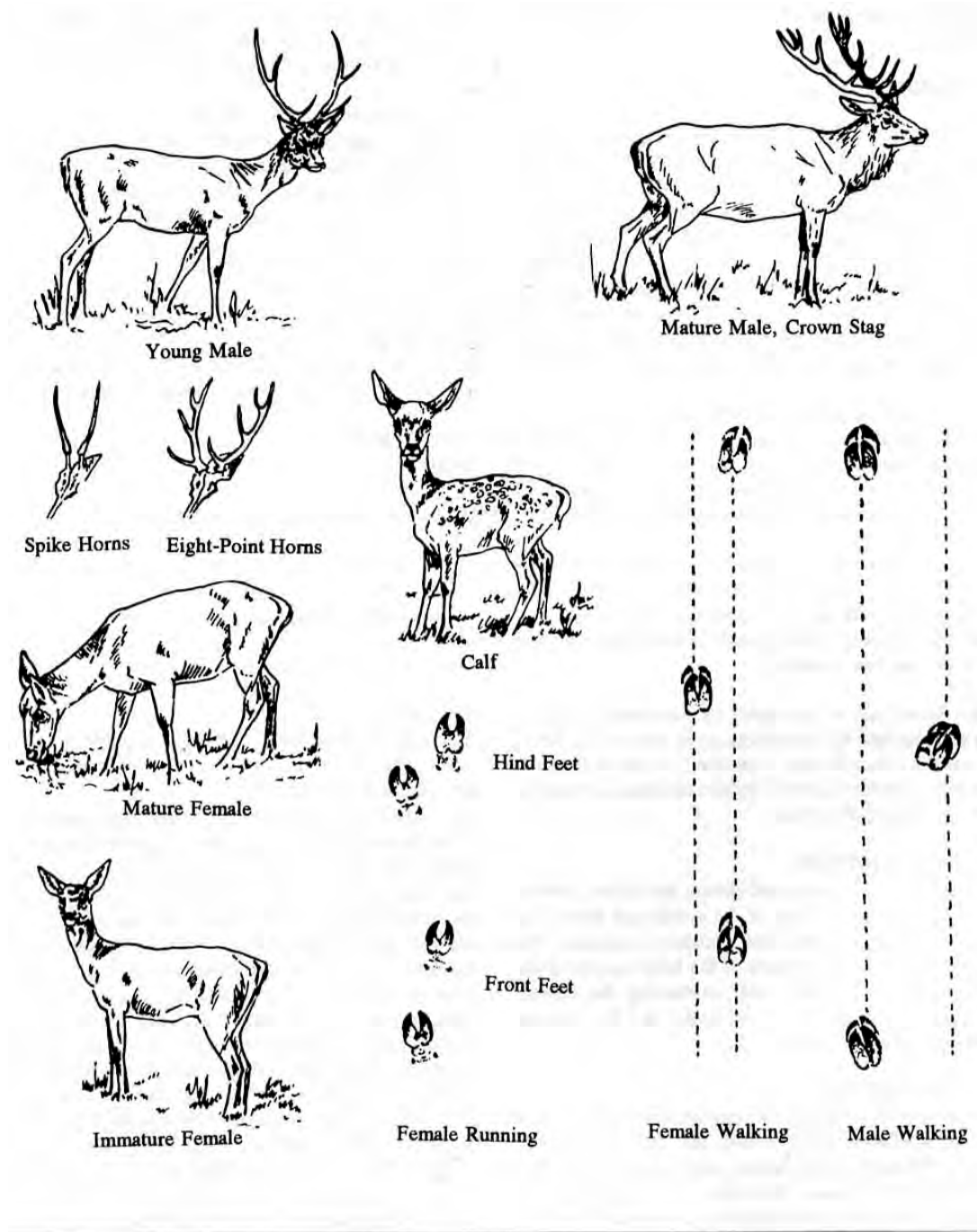
Females are considered mature at 15 months when they have their first courtship experience.

Calves weigh 6 to 10 pounds at birth, are relatively slow growing, and may reach 60 to 75 pounds when they are one year old.



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Red deer select the best food the season offers (for example, in the spring, young buds, shoots of broadleaf trees, as well as young grasses and herbs; in summer, grain, cabbage, and beets; in the fall, chestnuts and acorns).



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Hirsch fighting during breeding season (Brunftzeit)

Foresters and Revier *Pächters* organize hunters to set up feeding stations during winter to avoid excessive game damage from hungry red deer.

When the young male calf is about 10 month old, he develops two low, round stumps on which grow two “roses” (*Rosenstöcke*).

Antlers develop from these stumps. With the start of his second year of living the first antlers will grow, normally spikes without *Rosen*.

Growth is finished in September, followed by rubbing off the velvet. Spikes will be shed in the following spring, during the third summer *Rosen* develop and antlers with four to six points will grow.

The number of points will increase now year by year and the end of the antlers develop a fork or with 3 or more points a crown (*Krone*).

If a stag develops an uneven number of points, the side with the most points is added up and doubled, these antlers are called uneven.

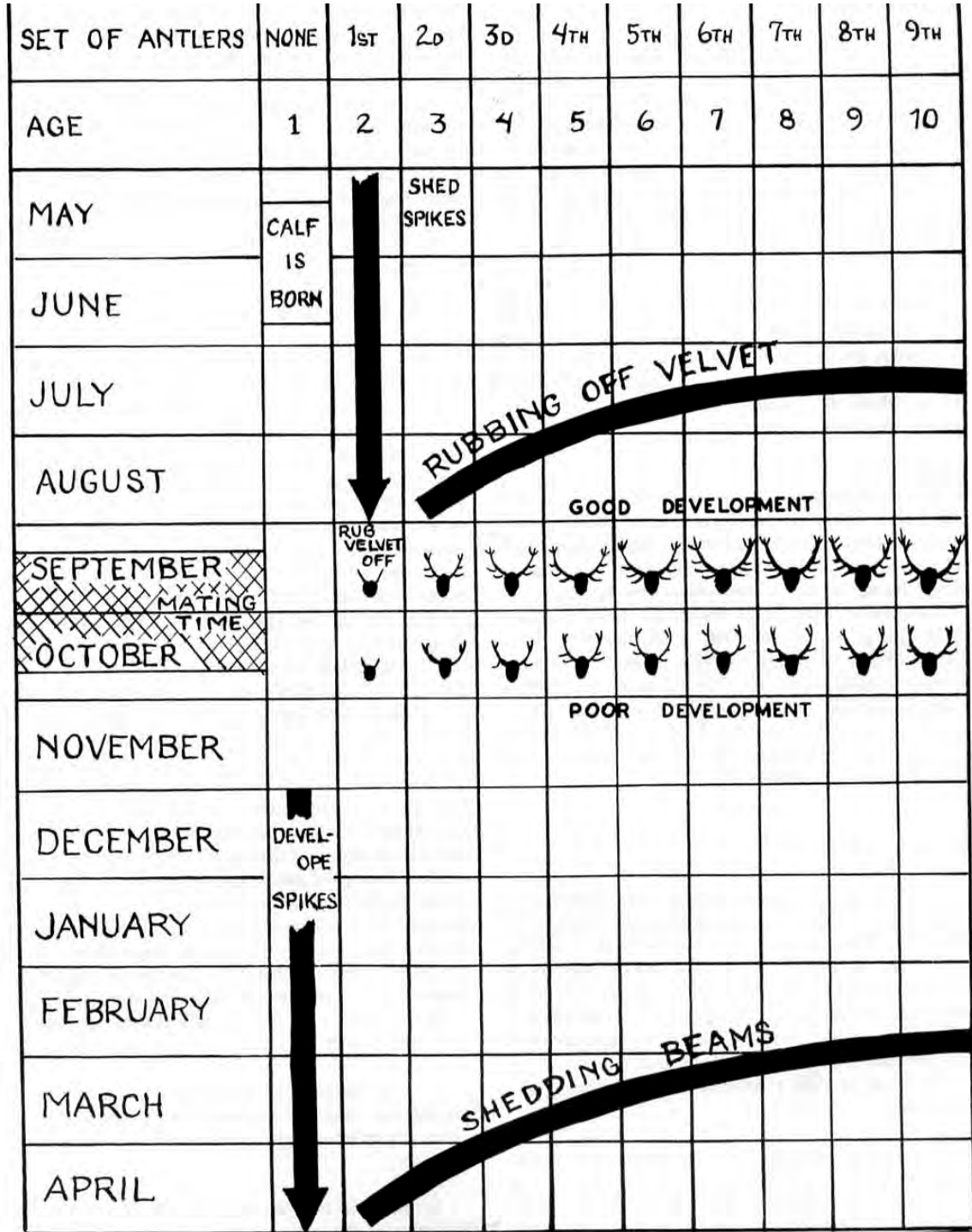
For example, a stag with 5 points on one side and 4 points on the other side is called an uneven ten-pointer (*ungerader Zehner*), if he develops 5 points on both sides he is called an even ten-pointer (*gerader Zehner*).



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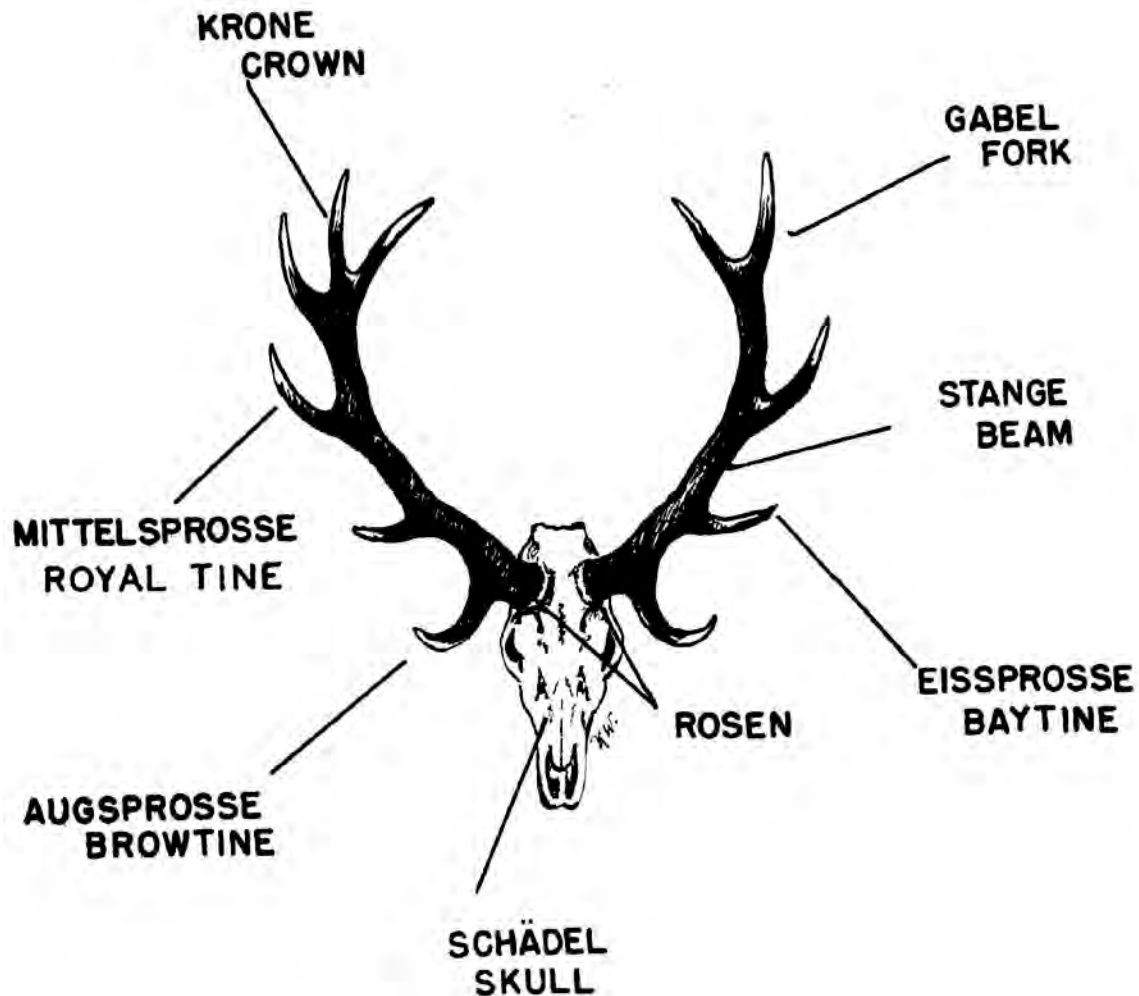
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The *Rothirsch* will reach the peak of his antler development in his twelfth year.





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Stags are classified by age into three classes, class III (young), class II (middle age) and class I (mature stags).

In addition, stags are graded by quality, with “A” for stags with normal, good antler development and “B” for stags with poor or unwanted antler development.

For example, a young stag with uneven 4-point antlers will be a class IIIB.

Class “A” red deer are referred to as “*Zukunftshirsche*”, or “future stags”.



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Class I Hirsch



Class IIB Hirsch



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Class IIIB Hirsch

The form of a promising young stag's antlers suggests the shape of a rectangle, while the antlers of a young stag of inferior quality suggest the form of a triangle.



Rectangle:
Stud



Triangle:
Cull



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From the time the stag removes his velvet until the beginning of the breeding season, stags are very shy and spend their time feeding and storing up fat and energy for the *Brunft*. This period is known as the *Feistzeit*. At the beginning of the breeding season (Brunftzeit), usually about the third week of September, the old stags join the females.

When stags fight, the forests are alive with the sound of bellowing (*Röhren*) and the clashing of antlers. During such fights, the female Red deer graze quietly and only occasionally glance at the two fighters.

When an old stag gains possession of four to six females, he separates them from the herd and stays with them until the end of the breeding season or until a stronger stag comes along and replaces him.

A mature stag at his best strength can easily service four to six females. Old stags, however, lose considerable weight during the breeding season. The strongest stag with the best antlers is not always the master of the breeding place. Usually the oldest stags are the rulers because they are more experienced in fighting.

After the breeding season, the stags leave the females and live peacefully together again. Normally, the rutting season ends in the middle of October, but some rutting may take place until the end of October.

In May or June of the following year, females normally have one calf.

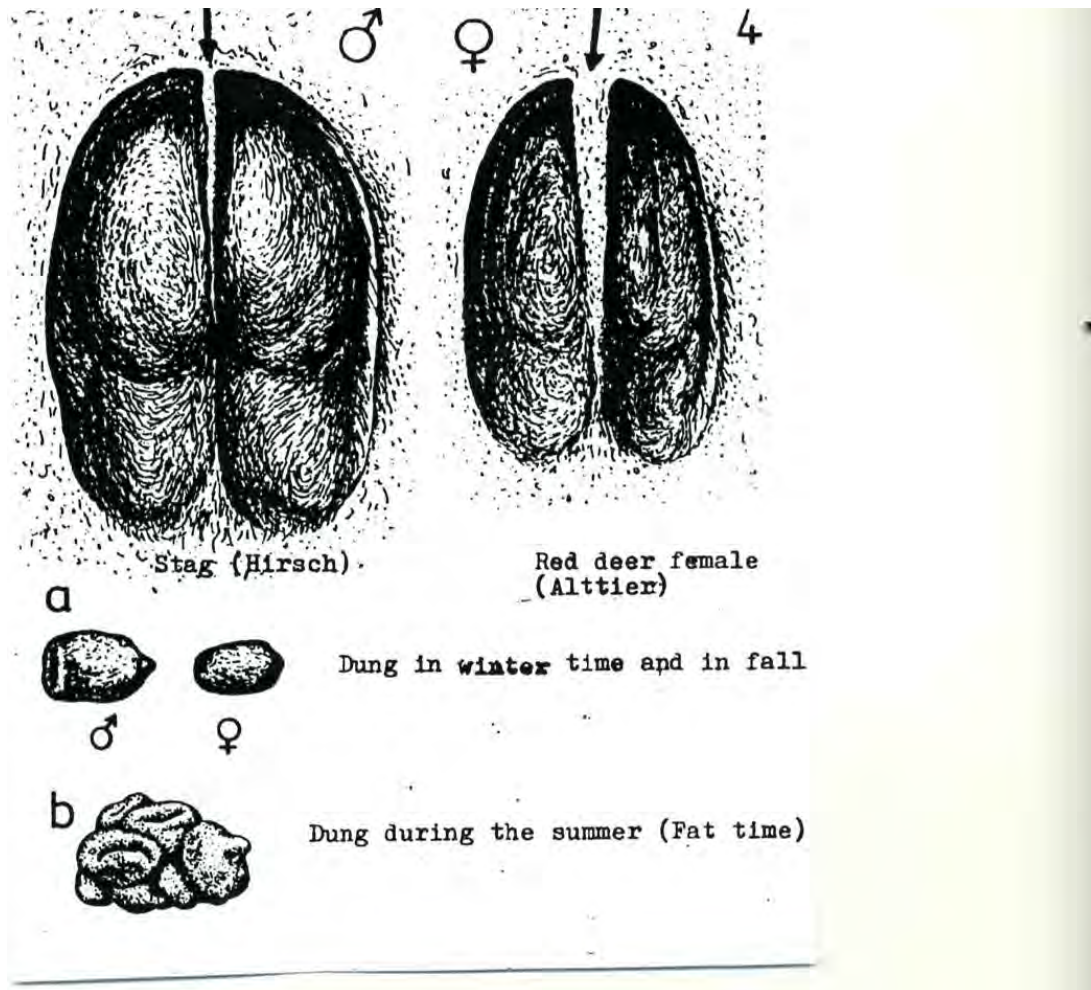
During the first days of their lives, the calves are hidden in dense thickets and remain alone during the day.

Their white spots provide excellent camouflage, and it is not easy to detect a calf if it is flattened against the ground.

The female returns at night to nurse the calf. After 10 days, the young are able to accompany their mothers.



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STAGS IN DIFFERENT AGE

2nd year

The head is carried high.
The neck is thin.
The figure is slender.
The antlers are usually spikes.



4th to 5th year

The head is carried high.
The neck is a little heavier.
The body looks stronger.
In the 4th to 5th year the antlers may have 6 – 10 points.



7th to 11th year

The head is carried lower.
The neck is strong and has long hairs on the lower part (Machne, Brunftkragen).
The body mass is located more forward.
In this age Hirsch usually have 10 – 16 points, very strong Hirsch may reach more than 20 points.
The peak of antler development is usually reached at 12 years of age.



Older than 12 years

The head is carried deep.
The neck is heavy.
The back bone is curved downward.
The body mass seems to rest on the front legs.
The beams still grow in diameter, usually not in length. The number of points will decrease, very old stags of more than 16 years of age may just have dark, short stumps with no or few points.

