

# ASK THE EXPERTS



PHOTO SUBMITTED

William "Spike" Funk (left) took this three-beamed buck in Warren County while Shawn Boggs killed this four-beamed buck in Powell County.



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**Q** Kentucky Afield received two photos of unusual bucks taken during the 2012 season. William "Spike" Funk killed a three-beamed buck in Warren County while Shawn Boggs took a four-beamed deer in Powell County. Why do some bucks grow multiple antlers?

**A** The most likely explanations for multiple antler beams are genetics or injuries to the growing antler.

If damage occurs only to the velvet antler itself, then just that rack will be affected. The buck will not have multiple beams the following year. However if there is damage to the pedicle – the bony knob from which the antler grows – or the frontal skull bone from which the pedicle arises, then each successive set of antlers will have the extra beam.

At least one deer researcher considers pedicle injuries to be the most common cause of multiple main antler beams. Deer management geared toward producing

older bucks – for example, Kentucky's one-buck rule – can increase the occurrence of multiple antlers. This is because older bucks tend to fight more aggressively. Fighting can lead to the damage which produces multiple beams. Both bucks shown on this page appear to be at least 3½ years old.

If the reason is genetic, bucks will grow multiple beams year after year – although the defect may not appear until the deer is three years old. People should see more than one multi-beamed buck if the cause is genetic.

Deer with multiple beams that each have their own pedicle are not eligible for

the Boone and Crockett Club trophy status. However, since the beams of the bucks in these photos arise from the base of either the right or left main beam, they are simply treated as abnormal points and scored accordingly.

All of this further helps to explain why antlers are such a source of endless fascination for so many people. A new set grows every year from the top of the head of a member of the Cervid family. As with snowflakes, no two racks are ever completely alike.

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## DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR OUR BIOLOGISTS OR STAFF?

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