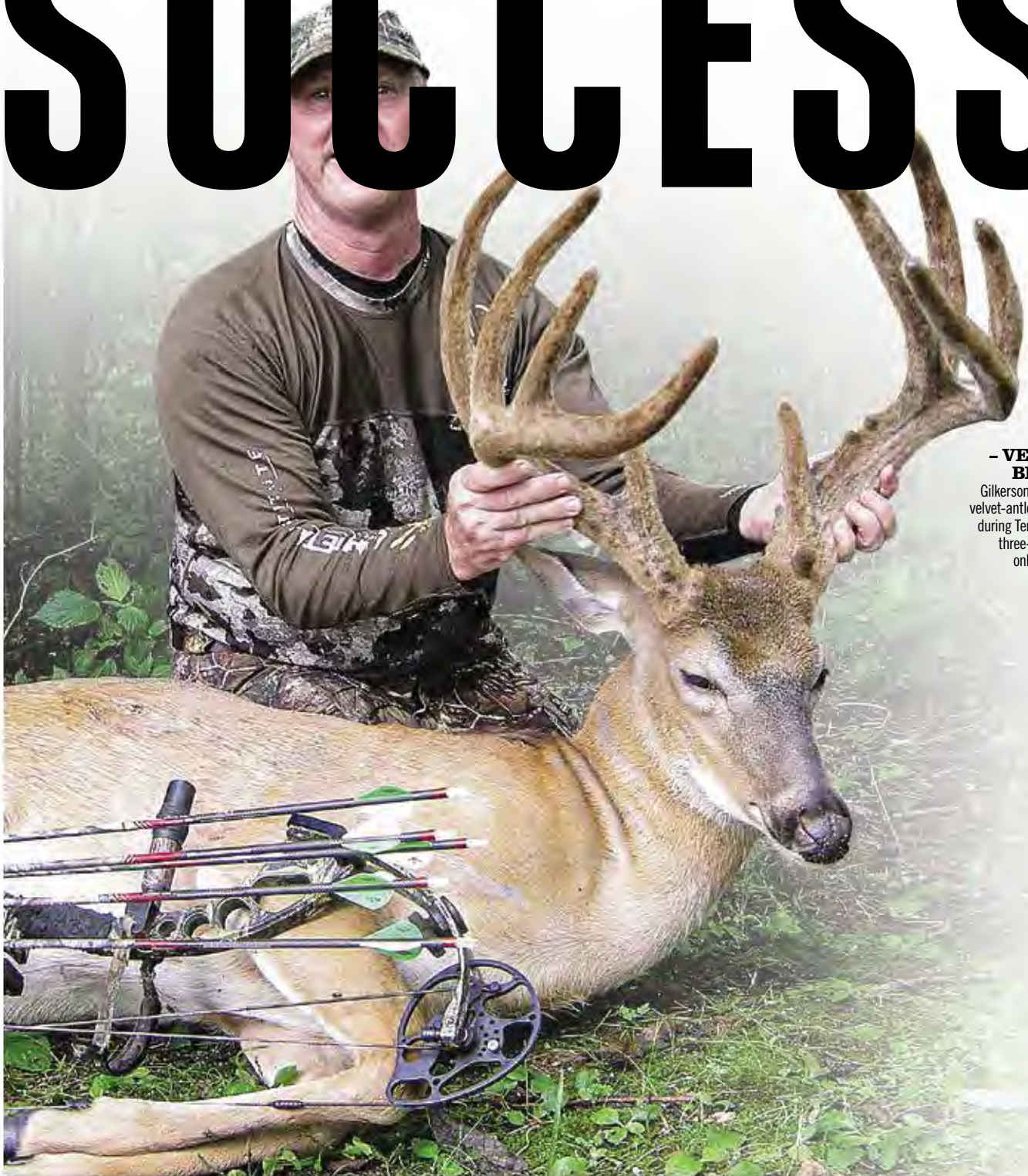


■ by *Drew Gilkerson*

NO-PLOW

SUCCESS



- VELVET BRUTE

Gilkerson shot this velvet-antlered buck during Tennessee's three-day buck only season.

Imperial No-Plow was the key to attracting this Tennessee buck.

My 2020 No-Plow success story started in 2019, when I planted Whitetail Institute's Secret Spot in an area of woods where deer were traveling between bedding and feeding areas. I wanted to hunt the spot in a ground blind with my 8-year-old grandson in hopes of him taking a deer with my crossbow. We were blessed that season, as he shot a great 11-point buck in that food plot the opening day of Tennessee's 2019 archery season.

Even with the success my grandson had with Secret Spot, I wanted to create a test plot during Spring 2020 using Imperial No-Plow, so I purchased a couple of bags from a Whitetail Institute dealer to begin an experiment. No-Plow is an annual, and I typically plant it during fall. However, I wanted to try it in spring to see the results. It worked, as deer continued visiting the plot throughout spring and early summer until it had basically been eliminated from overbrowsing.

I sacrificed one bag of seed, but it was worth it to establish the plot and keep deer visiting the same place consistently. I found that to be an effective method. On Aug. 1, it was easy to return to the plot with little disruption and rake out debris, reapply lime, broadcast a second bag, hang a Moultrie trail camera and set up my ground blind where I had the previous year.

When I returned a couple of weeks later to exchange SD cards in my trail camera, I saw the first picture, from the morning of Aug. 2. It showed a great buck cruising the edge of the plot, where I had been just the day before. Overall, the SD images revealed seven bucks and a few does and fawns nibbling on the emerging new growth of No-Plow during that two-week period between exchanging the cards. During that mid-August visit, I saw the No-Plow was growing well, and the plot was laden with deer tracks. The pictures indicated most of the deer activity was occurring during the morning, when deer were going to bed. Knowing the Tennessee buck-only season

opener was only a couple of weeks away, I didn't return to the No-Plow plot until it was time to hunt. I had all the information I needed to know that a good buck was nearby and that the No-Plow would likely keep him visiting the plot, and I didn't want to risk spooking him.

I've hunted in Kentucky the past few years during the early bow season, trying to harvest a buck in velvet, but I haven't had any luck. In 2018, Tennessee opened its first three-day buck-only season, and I knew I would have more opportunities. However, the first two seasons passed, and I struck out during both. I saw a few small bucks with velvet, but there were no opportunities for the one I wanted to harvest as my first velvet buck. But I believed my third 2020 Tennessee buck-only season would be the charm.

I practiced shooting my bow from inside a ground blind in my backyard that summer in hopes of keeping my shooting form. I believe that practice helped me a lot as the hunt unfolded and the buck entered the plot.

The buck was the first and only deer I saw opening morning. I had my blind set on the opposite side of the plot from where I'd captured his picture, and as it became daylight, I imagined him entering the plot and crossing in front of me, and then I'd make the perfect shot.

My hunts normally don't go that way, but unbelievably, as I daydreamed of that scenario, I saw movement between trees about 50 yards away. When I looked through my binoculars, I was stoked to see it was him, and he was coming directly to the No-Plow plot. As he walked along the plot edge, I

began drawing my bowstring and focused, just like during practice. But when I reached full draw, I didn't shoot, even though the buck was broadside at 17 yards. He stopped to browse, but his closest front leg was back and covering his vitals more than I liked, so I waited to shoot. Instead of stepping forward and continuing on that path, he unexpectedly turned and offered me a hard quartering-away shot. But at that distance and with my practice, it was easy to remain steady while keeping my sight pins lined up on the opposite front leg. I placed my top pin on his last rib and squeezed the trigger on my release. Although I lost sight of the buck as he ran off, I waited an appropriate amount of time and made a brief recovery.

I harvested my first whitetail in 1981 and have been a fanatic about the animals since that first little 4-pointer. The Whitetail Institute started the food plot industry in 1988 and has constantly been an innovative outdoor industry leader during the ensuing three decades. I'm fortunate to work in the hunting industry. God blesses me every day, and one of those blessings is that he granted me the opportunity to combine my love for hunting whitetails with my job.

No-Plow works exceptionally well in wooded areas with filtered sunlight, and you don't need much equipment to be successful. I used a leaf blower and a rake in 2019 to clear that spot. In 2020, I used a rake to clear debris. Combining No-Plow and a little work afforded me the best bow kill during my 39 years of chasing whitetails.



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL NO-PLOW

- Includes specially selected exclusive clovers, brassica, WINA 412 Radish and other forages
- **Annual:** Fast-growing annual perfect for logging roads, clearcuts and minimal or no tillage situations
- **High protein;** Up to 36 percent protein

Optimum Growing Environment:

- **Soil Type:** Virtually anywhere good seed-to-soil contact can be attained
- Avoid lighter or sandier soils, and sites that drain quickly
- **Soil pH:** 5.5-7.5
- **Sunlight:** 3-4 hours of broken, filtered or direct sunlight a day
- Can be planted in spring or fall

LINK: <https://bit.ly/3trtqsr>

