

Lapse in Judgment Leads to Series of Wrong Choices

A Goshen County landowner contacted Game Warden Brady Vandenberg after he found three dead deer on his property on Oct. 4, 2010. The antlers were the only thing taken from the deer. The landowner also reported seeing a white Ford pickup truck leaving adjoining private land earlier in the day.

The neighboring landowner was questioned and reported having given permission to a Torrington resident to hunt on his land, and that individual owned a white Ford truck. Vandenberg contacted Torrington Game Warden Jon Stephens who located the truck at the owner's residence. The truck's owner denied any knowledge of the three abandoned deer, but stated his son had possession of the truck at the time the deer were shot.

The man consented to a search of the garage to look for any evidence related to the crime. Vandenberg discovered a fresh 4x5 mule deer rack in a wooden box in the corner of the garage, which he was told belonged to a friend of the man's son. The man called his son's cell phone and asked him to come home. When first questioned the son denied any knowledge of the abandoned deer, but soon admitted his involvement. He said he, his friend, and his step-brother had attempted hunting on a nearby ranch on Oct. 2nd but had no luck. They traveled to a neighboring ranch and saw a group of bucks. All three boys shot a buck and were getting ready to load them into the pickup truck when they saw a vehicle approaching the area. They immediately left, abandoning the deer.



On Oct. 3rd, two of the boys returned to land where they had permission to hunt and one of the boys shot a second mule deer buck, which they retrieved and took home. The boys later returned to the scene of the crime to retrieve the antlers from the three abandoned deer.

All three boys were charged with waste of a big game animal, and hunting on private land without permission. Two of the boys were also charged with taking over the limit of big game, and one was charged with aiding and abetting. Fines of more than \$1,500 and 30 days of jail time were suspended for each boy. Loss of hunting privileges for three years

for the over-limit violations will be suspended if the boys complete 50 hours of community service.

“This is a prime example of how one lapse in judgment can lead to a series of wrong choices, making a bad situation worse,” Warden Vandenberg comments. “If these teenagers would have just taken responsibility for the trespassing violation instead of abandoning the deer they would have avoided the subsequent violations of abandoning game meat and over limit, which resulted in substantial fines and embarrassment for their families.”