



Record-breaking roe

Marco Pierre White shoots another monster roebuck in Somerset with professional stalking guide David Rees. *Sporting Rifle* has all the details

Stalkers, farmers and agents came together to put celebrity chef Marco Pierre White into the buck of a lifetime. West Country Deer Services' David Rees came across the buck whilst on a recce of his stalking ground in advance of the forthcoming roe rut. Dave and his colleague glassed a buck behaving strangely, and on closer inspection with the spotting scope, both gasped when they realised the animal was a peruke buck. This was the first sighting of such an odd creature for the two stalkers.

David immediately contacted his UK agent, Owen Beardsmore of Cervus UK. He needed a client for the buck immediately as it really had to be shot as soon as possible. A peruke buck's abnormal antler growth normally spreads over the eyes and eventually blinds the buck; combined with blowfly larvae getting into the head, this usually means that most perukes are dead by

midsummer. Owen was as excited as the two stalkers and started contacting his clients. By six the following morning he had none other than celebrity chef Marco Pierre White on his way to shoot the buck. "No pressure there then," thought Dave, who had an anxious wait ahead.

As the day went on, frantic messages were exchanged between Marco, Owen and Dave regarding the buck's behaviour. The worry was this: as the animal wasn't a normal roebuck, would it behave the same as other roebucks? This started a nagging doubt in all their minds: would this animal behave as a roe should and remain in the area? Marco voiced all of their collective concerns and asked outright, "Will it still be there or not?" All the boys could do was hope and wait.

The group convened the following afternoon at half past five, and prepared to head to the stalking ground – but first, a brief stop to check zero. A possible world-class buck was on offer and none of them wanted any mishaps. Marco proved his marksmanship, and the group went to meet the farmer.

After a quick chat followed by a debrief, they moved into the area



where the buck had last been seen. Dave and Marco stalked the fields around where it had been sighted, but three fields later there was still no sign. It was still early, though, so no panic just yet. They continued down through an uncut hay field. Dave used the call a couple of times to see if it would encourage the buck to raise its head out of the grass. On the third attempt, a brown-red flash was seen moving through the half-grown maize field in front of them. Was it the buck? No, false alarm: it was a doe and twins. Taking a breather, the two hunters sat and scanned the surrounding area for a short time until Dave decided to take a look over a nearby gate and checked a small, recently-cut hay field. He immediately spied the buck, facing away from them by the opposite hedge. Dave turned quickly to Marco,





and his excitement alone was enough to catch Marco's attention. Side by side, the two stalkers took in the importance of the animal before them.

Although the buck was within range, Marco couldn't get a clear shot through the undergrowth with the Harris bipod. Marco doesn't like shooting off sticks but after a lot of debate it was decided that taking the shot from them was the only option. He took aim and seemed comfortable with the rifle; Dave readied himself for the shot. However, Marco came off the sticks and turned to Dave, saying he couldn't get his breathing right. He was clearly overwhelmed by the buck. As he later said himself, Marco had shot hundreds of bucks and none had ever made him lose his composure like this one.

Marco took to the sticks once more and took a deep, calming breath. He took up the trigger; the rifle cracked the still morning air and the peruke buck collapsed to a perfect shot. Desperate to see the head close up, Dave had to navigate across a six-foot dyke that was waist deep with stagnant water. Smelling like a polecat, Dave eventually made his way across the mire to the buck, guided and encouraged the whole way by an enthusiastic Marco.

Dave recovered the awesome roe and returned to a very anxious Marco to admire the trophy. This was the strangest roebuck either of the two experienced stalkers had ever seen. Both were struck by the sheer chance that had made this opportunity possible – the fact that the buck had lived this late into the season

Magnificent malform: the peruke is hoped to be the heaviest recorded in history



Dave Rees and Marco Pierre White pose with their trophy after a demanding day's shooting

with such an abnormality was wonder enough. This was a most unusual peruke head, as it had antler growth still in velvet protruding from the top of the peruke mass. There was silence back at the truck as all concerned let the enormity of taking such a unique trophy sink in.

Marco Pierre White is a true ambassador to roe stalking here in the UK. He realises the value of proper deer management, and practises it on his own ground. Marco is fortunate to have previously shot the UK record roe, and Marco's latest monster will probably turn out to be the heaviest recorded malformed head of all time. Looks like the sun does always shine on the righteous after all. ■

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