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# The Buck Stops Here

*Not anymore! By Diane Donovan*



When we bought our country home near Bloomfield, California, we were warned about the wildlife: Deer will eat all your 2.5 acres, possums will destroy your garage, and the raccoons are rabid and will eat you! Those were just a few of the local legends.

So we weren't surprised when Bambi made her appearance, especially since we were the only house in the neighborhood without a huge Barkey Bark (a dog, in Diane lingo). Bill, my husband, wasn't concerned. He pointed out that deer are browsers. They take generous nibbles and move on. In no way were his prized rosebushes in danger.

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talk to the deer.  
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And she left.*

When I raised my eyebrows, Bill said, "All right, I'll show you." Then he stepped outside to, yes, *talk* to the deer. I should point out that Bill is amazing with animals, but—who knew?—apparently he is the quintessential Wild Animal Whisperer. "Hello," he said softly. "I am so happy to see you. You are welcome to drop by. But, umm, thou shalt not eat all. You understand, I'm sure."

The deer did seem to understand. She took a few small bites, then she flicked her ears and left.

After that, we had daily deer, all of whom seemed intent on eating only appetizer-sized nibbles. All was well.

Until one day a buck came by for a visit. Bucky Buck. He was large. He was majestic, in size and antlers. And he was rude.

Shrubbery—and roses—began to vanish.

Bill was sure the deer were innocent, until he personally observed Bucky Buck decimating one of his favorite bushes. When Bill tried talking to Bucky Buck, the stag glared back—then chomped down on Bill's favorite rose, Prize of Season.

What could we do?

When Bambi came by for her usual visit later, Bill began a dialogue (yes, a *dialogue*) with her.

*Bill (sighing and pointing to Prize of Season):* Look at this!

Bambi looked. I could swear she, too, sighed.

*Bill (admonishingly):* I know you had nothing to do with it. But I simply can't have this. (pause) I shall have to buy a large BARKEY BARK if this continues.

I swear, Bambi's eyes widened. Her ears stopped flicking and she stood stock still, stunned. She appeared to contemplate the possibilities for a moment, then turned and tiptoed away.

A few hours later, I called Bill to the back window.

Bucky Buck was out there in all his pompous, rude glory—surrounded by five female deer.

*Bill:* It must be rutting season. He's there with his women.

*Me:* No, look—they're moving as a unit towards the drive!

We watched, open-mouthed, as five female deer and one rude male clip-clopped down our driveway to our property's boundary line and walked off into the sunset.

It wasn't rutting season. It was an escort service.

The perp had been apprehended, lectured in Deer, and summarily escorted off our property.

Bucky Buck never returned.

This story is true. We still have plenty of deer around us—and a bountiful garden that gets only casually nibbled. Our neighbors, though, curse the local deer. And no wonder.

Their gardens get eaten to the ground. ❖

