Hot Weather Has Arrived

July in Texas. The heat has arrived. At least we are better off than we were last year. With-in the next few weeks most of the fawns will be on the ground, most of the birds will be done nesting for the season and bucks are growing their antlers for this year. As the days get hotter, food for deer can start getting a little harder to find. So keeping protein out at this time of year is probably a good idea to help with lactating does and antler growth.

Everyone should put up pens around deer feeders to exclude pigs from getting an easy meal. A fence between 24 and 30 inches tall will do the job but still allow the deer to come and go.

I know that the weeds are looking pretty bad out there, but please leave the shredder parked for a little while longer. Hold off until the fawns are up and moving with their mothers, tolerate the jungle until the end of July.

The hot weather can also be tough on your fish, causing low oxygen levels and fish kills. You might want to stop feeding catfish due to the increased nutrient loads which can further decree the oxygen content in the water.

Pig Pressure

In case you missed it, we had a week long pig contest that was held in the county back in April. I was hoping for more teams of up to four people would have entered it. The cost was $150 per team plus a $50 side pot for heaviest sow and boar. The rules were the pigs could be taken by any legal means during the contest period and the pigs had to be taken from inside Lee County. The prize money was awarded to the top three teams with the most pigs and the side pot money to the teams taking the heaviest boar and the heaviest sow. Only 8 teams entered but they still managed to kill a little over 200 pigs in 7 days. I know of other trappers that did not enter that also removed a considerable number that same week.

Keep in mind that you need to remove around 70% of a pig population just to keep it from getting bigger!

I hope we can have more of these contests or other ways of encouraging people to keep pressure on pig numbers. If you have pigs on your property but do not have the time or means to remove them, please let me know. I bet we can find someone to help with that problem.

Like deer, pigs will be looking for food sources as temperatures rise making baiting more enticing. I know that box traps are convenient to use but please do all you can to avoid trapping deer. Using fermented/stinky corn can reduce it’s attractiveness to deer, otherwise use traps with an open top so deer can jump out.
Anyone wishing to place a business card ad for one year may contact the Lee County Wildlife Association
c/o Texas AgriLife Extension
310 South Grimes
Giddings TX 78942
979-542-2753
TO RECEIVE DOE PERMITS PLEASE COMPLETE THIS PORTION OF THE FORM ALONG WITH YOUR HERD COMPOSITION DATA ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM

☐ I did not receive permits last year.
☐ I received permits last year using the TWIMS system but my contact information has changed
☐ I received permits last year and my contact information has not changed
☐ Other problem (describe): _______________________________________________________

Your Name: __________________________ Property Name: ________________________________
Wildlife Management Association: _______________________________________________________
Requesters Mailing Address (road, city, zip): _____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Address of property permits are being requested for: _______________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Phone Numbers: ________________________ ________________________ _______________________
E-mail: ___________________________________ Number of acres in the tract requesting permits: _____

HERD COMPOSITION DATA

Herd composition data (often called incidental observations) may be the most valuable data collected on a deer herd. When properly collected, herd composition data can reflect the overall health of a herd and help guide the manager in making proper harvest recommendations.

Herd composition data should be collected between August 1 and September 15

The fawns have become a part of the herd by this time, yet they are small enough to be easily distinguished from adult deer. Observations outside this period may result in inaccurate data. Observations may be collected any time during the day. However, the first and last hours of daylight are often the most productive.

All deer recorded must be viewed through binoculars or a spotting scope

Small antlers are easily overlooked without optical aids. Fawns whose spots have started to fade are also hard to distinguish when they are observed alone. Be sure to look at the hips of deer that you think could possibly be fawns because the hips are the last place to lose spots.

Ideally, a minimum of 150 deer should be identified

If possible, a larger sample size is desirable to strengthen the data and increase the confidence in the harvest recommendations. Observations can be made during routine ranch operations or as a special effort. On smaller ranches (<300 acres), it may not be feasible to obtain 150 deer observations, but efforts should be made to get at least 50. Members of Wildlife Management Associations should get at least 30 deer observations for ranches <300 acres and 50-100 deer observations for ranches >300 acres. Observing the same deer recorded on a previous count is not a concern. If a conscientious effort is made to record accurate data, a small amount of duplicate recording should not affect the ratios. All deer should be recorded as a buck, doe, or fawn. Recording bucks according to number of antler points is also beneficial. The occurrence of inferior animals versus multi point animals can be used to measure progress in the quality of the deer herd over time.

Submit data by SEPTEMBER 15 to
Greg Pleasant
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
200 S Main - 203A
Giddings TX 78942
979-540-2744
**HERD COMPOSITION / INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS**

If you are requesting doe permits please complete the form on reverse side in addition

Ranch Name: ___________________________ County: Lee Year: 2012

Observer: ___________________________ Property Owner: ___________________________

Your Wildlife Management Association (CIRCLE ONE) → Two Creeks South Lee West Yegua East Yegua Blue Branch

PLEASE MAKE SURE TO TOTAL THE NUMBERS AT THE BOTTOM!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>2-3 Point Bucks</th>
<th>4-7 Point Bucks</th>
<th>8+ Point Bucks</th>
<th>Undetermined Bucks</th>
<th>Does</th>
<th>Fawns</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/4</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL

Example
DO NOT SEND change-of-address notices or dues payments to the address above. These must be sent to YOUR OWN LOCAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION.

THE NEED FOR DEER CHECK STATION DATA
Bobby Eichler, Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange

This past hunting season, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) began operating seventeen voluntary hunter check stations across the “original” six counties that implemented the antler restriction regulation in Texas back in 2002. These counties were Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington. Some may recall the voluntary hunter check stations in these counties and that data was collected for the first six hunting seasons (2002 through 2007) in which the antler restriction regulation began. From 2008 through 2010, the department took a three-year hiatus from operating the check stations. The original plan was to collect deer age and antler data in three-year increments to detect trends in antler mass and to monitor the age structure of the buck segment. This past year was the beginning year in another three-year data collection period (2011 through 2013) in which biologists would like to collect age and antler data on bucks harvested in the six “original” counties.

The data collected at these hunter check stations is important to monitor the deer herd and impacts the antler restriction regulation is having on the buck segment. The antler restriction regulation is now the law in 117 counties basically covering the eastern third of Texas. These six “original” counties have been operating under this regulation for the longest in the state, so we have a unique set of age and antler data.

This past hunting season, TPWD attempted to replicate the data collection process used in the first six years of data collection. The number of deer recorded at the check stations for the 2011-2012 hunting season was low when compared to past collection periods. Only 374 deer were brought to hunter check stations across the six counties (see Table 1). In the period from 2002 through 2007, the number of deer brought into check stations ranged from a low of 627 (initial year of the antler restriction regulation) to a high of 938. In the past, the number of deer brought to check stations “mirrored” the total harvest as reported by the TPWD’s Big Game Hunter Harvest Survey. Basically this indicated that during years when habitat conditions were good, such as the 2007–08 season, hunters harvested less deer than average and less deer were brought to check stations. The opposite occurs during years when habitat conditions are poor, such as the 2006–07 season, when hunters harvested more deer than average and also brought more deer to the check stations.

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<th>Lavaca</th>
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<td>2002-03</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>58</td>
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<td>2003-04</td>
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<td>291</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
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<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>2011-12</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>70</td>
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Another issue may be local buck contests held within the counties. Several of the six counties and associated Wildlife Management Associations now have buck contests for both trophy bucks and cull bucks. While these contests are a great idea, hunters may not be willing to have a deer measured for a buck competition, and then spend extra time going to a TPWD check station. TPWD has also been hesitant about collecting data from bucks entered into...
regardless counties.

Prior people improve on age was with management was established with two primary objectives: 1) to improve the age structure of the buck herd, and 2) to improve hunter opportunity. The new antler regulation defined a legal buck as either having, 1) an inside spread greater than 13 inches, 2) at least one unbranched antler, or 3) at least 6 points on one side. These regulations took effect in 2002 and the counties remained one buck counties.

After three seasons an improvement was scene in most aspects of the regulation. Buck age structure did improve and hunter opportunity did not suffer. There was one trend detected though that was not favorable; as buck age structure and antler quality began to increase hunters stopped shooting the unbranched portion of the herd and focused on the 13-inch and better portion. This can be seen in the decline of 1½ year old bucks during the seasons of 2002 through 2004 (see Figure 1 on the opposite page).

During 2005, the regulation was extended and changed slightly. The parameter for bucks to have 6 points on one side was removed from the regulation due to the very small number of bucks that met the criteria. More importantly, in order to not protect un-branched antlered bucks, county bag limits were bumped to 2 bucks of which only 1 buck could have a spread greater than 13 inches. This gave hunters an opportunity to harvest bucks with unbranched antlers without ‘burning a tag’. The removal of unbranched bucks was supported by previous TPWD research at the Kerr Wildlife Management Association (http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_rp_w7000_0827.pdf).

Well, now ten years after antler regulations have been in place, the overall age structure of the harvest has improved greatly, which has in turn improved the age structure of the standing herd. Take a look at Figure 1 (on page 3) and you can detect some major shifts:

- Prior to the regulation, 80% of the harvest was bucks less than 2½ years old
- Early in the regulation, by 2004, approximately 29% of the harvest was less than 2½ years old while 71% of the harvest was 3½ years are older
- From 2005 through 2007, the harvest of 3½ year old bucks stayed steady at 68-73% of the harvest with the 4½ year old and older class making up 35-41% of the harvest
- During the collection period representing 2011, bucks 4½ years and older jumped to 47% of the harvest
- Generally, as the regulation goes on, we are seeing a steady increase in the number of 4½, 5½, and 6½ year old age classes in the harvest

Overall, the age structure of the harvest and the buck herd has increased. As far as increasing hunter opportunity, the annual TPWD Big Game Hunter Harvest Survey has shown that the numbers of bucks harvested annually across each of the six counties has trended higher than during the pre-regulation period. There are still some low years and some high years, but that is hunting.

For the first time since late 2009, District 7 is fully staffed. On June 1, 2012 two new biologists started duties in Austin, Colorado, Lavaca, and Jackson Counties. We would like to thank all the folks in these respective counties for having patience and working with District staff over the past months while they were without a local biologist.

Doug Lobes is the new biologist for Lavaca and Jackson Counties. Doug is a native of east-central Georgia and grew up on a small farm. Doug has served in the United States Army with the 1st Ranger Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment. Afterwards Doug earned a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Georgia in 2008. Having an interest in quail management, Doug then achieved a Master’s degree from Oklahoma State University in Wildlife Ecology and Management. Doug brings to the district experience with agriculture, quail management, and prescribed burning.

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competitions for fear of biasing the data. However, it appears that we are missing collecting data on a significant number of bucks being harvested. TPWD is going to work with the local Associations and interested people to create a certification process for those scoring and aging bucks brought to contests, so that data can be used in the TPWD data set. Hopefully, this creates a “one stop shopping” approach, so that hunters can more easily get their data collected.

Please remember this coming year to either bring your harvested buck to one of your local voluntary check stations or make sure that data is being collected on that deer and going to TPWD. We will continue to advertise and remind people to get their bucks scored and aged. We would like any harvested buck to be recorded, regardless of size.

TEN YEARS OF ANTLER REGULATIONS
Bobby Eichler, Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange

The 2011 – 2012 season marks the tenth year that antler regulations have been in place in Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee, and Washington counties. Most hunters and landowners within this area are quite familiar with the history behind the regulations, but so everyone is on the same page, I will give a quick summary.

Prior to 2002, immature bucks were a large proportion of the buck harvest across this district. The hunter bag limit in these counties was one buck and tremendous pressure was put on bucks by the many hunters across a landscape dominated by small properties. Typically, 80% of the annual buck harvest consisted of bucks 2½ years old or younger, with very few bucks making it to maturity.

With the support of local landowners and wildlife management associations, an experimental regulation was established with two primary objectives: 1) to improve the age structure of the buck herd, and 2) to improve hunter opportunity. The new antler regulation defined a legal buck as either having, 1) an inside spread greater than 13 inches, 2) at least one unbranched antler, or 3) at least 6 points on one side. These regulations took effect in 2002 and the counties remained one buck counties.

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FIGURE 1: Buck Harvest Age Structure by Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buck Age</th>
<th>1.5</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>4.5+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Harvest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
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Data collected at TPWD check stations and deer aged by TPWD biologists

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