



## Walker County Agriculture Update

**October 2019**

Greetings from the Walker  
County, Texas A&M AgriLife  
Extension office!

**“The most dangerous worldview is the worldview of those who have not viewed the world” -  
Alexander von Humboldt**

Soil samples for **FREE TESTING (forage pastures/hay fields/wildlife foot plots)** at **The Scoop (on) Your  
Dirt Event** must be in the AgriLife Extension office **by October 4<sup>th</sup>** (see pg. 3).

Details are in for the **Cow Country Congress** event, **October 18<sup>th</sup>** (see pg. 4).

Glad to have you here! Read on.

- *When you have the opportunity, let others hear your message.*

### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Butterfly Festival**

**Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Walker County Texas AgriLife Extension office (Tam Road & Hwy 75 N, Huntsville)**

**10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

Bring the family. This is a great educational event to learn about butterflies and their importance to us. If you have never seen a butterfly being tagged for tracking purposes, you need to be here -it's a neat thing!! All ages are welcome. Children's area events available!! Tag & Release of Monarch butterflies is scheduled for 12:00 Noon. Meet the Walker Co Beekeepers and visit with some of our Master Naturalist friends. This educational festival is sponsored by the Walker County Master Gardeners.

#### **Backyard Poultry: Production & Management**

**Tuesday, October 1, 2019**

**6:30 PM**

**Walker Co AgriLife Extension Office (102 Tam Rd, Huntsville, TX 77320)**

**RSVP requested (936) 435-2426**

**Cost: \$10 per person**

(Topics) Breed Selection, Nutrition, Health Management & Disease Prevention, Egg Handling. – Dr. Craig Coufal, Extension Poultry Specialist & Program Leader

The popularity of raising backyard poultry has reemerged in recent years. If you have joined the chicken train or may be thinking about getting on-board, here is the educational event for you! Join us to learn how to care for these entertaining animals providing benefits of both fresh eggs and hours of good old fashion outdoor therapy.



### **Beef Cattle: Female Development & Selection Tuesday, October 8, 2019**

**7:00 PM**

Walker Co AgriLife Extension Office (102 Tam Rd, Huntsville, TX 77320)

RSVP requested (936) 435-2426

**Cost: \$10 per person**

(Topics) Selection & development of females, improving reproduction, body condition scoring, discussion of pregnancy detection methods (palpation, blood, ultrasound), Artificial insemination & synchronization. – Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

Developing a sound, physically capable herd of cattle requires forethought and planning. There are methods which will help you; however, you must implement the steps and make the correct decisions beforehand. This class will help explain what you can do to improve your herd performance.



### **Wild Game Dinner Tonight**

**Thursday, October 10**

**6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Walker Co Storm Shelter (455 SH75 N, Huntsville, TX)

RSVP required (936) 435-2426

**Cost: \$40 per person (or) \$70 per couple for all three menus**

If you like to eat exceptional wild game dishes, or if you want to learn how to prepare some outstanding healthy wild game recipes this will be a don't miss event! We will be discussing and demonstrating some excellent recipes for game fish, duck, and venison. Menus will be paired with local wines. Food safety & care of wild game meat prior to the kitchen will be discussed to help you get your "all-natural, free-range, organic" protein ready to eat.



## **The Scoop (on) Your Dirt Event!**

**Friday, October 25**

**12:00 PM (NOON) – 2:00 PM**

**Crabbs Prairie Volunteer Fire Department (28 FM 1696, Huntsville, TX 77320)**

**RSVP required (936) 435-2426**

**LUNCH PROVIDED**

**Testing Fee: NO CHARGE!!!!**

**Your Soil Samples must be turned into the Walker Co Extension Office prior to October 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**\*Special event Soil Collection forms (required)** will be available from the Walker Co Extension office (*phone number above*), OR REPLY TO THIS EMAIL AND REQUEST A FORM & I will email you a sample form.

Ok it's not dirt, it really is soil. This educational event is a replacement for our traditional Fall Hay Evaluation... Each year at the Hay Evaluation we talk about the soil fertility required to produce high quality hay. For 2019 we are going to turn the table a just a bit and talk about managing high quality productive soil which then supports your forages regardless of it being hay or grazing pastures (spring, summer, fall, or winter).

\*We want you to collect a sample of your soil from a field that needs help or an increase in production capability. We will have the sample tested at NO CHARGE to you, compliments of the Walker Co Livestock & Pasture Extension Committee. Sample forms are available at the Walker Co Extension office.



At the educational event, we will return your individual sample results. SHSU Agronomist, Dr. Bobby Lane will work with you to explain the meaning of the information you obtain from your analysis. Participants will learn how to correctly read and interpret these reports. You will know and understand what your soil pH level is and if there is need for adjustment. We will help you to determine fertilizer blends that support your individual results. Various tools will be discussed such as apps available for phones or tablets and the NRCS Soil Web Survey tool available online. NRCS District Conservationist, Floyd Nauls will provide insight and guidance on navigating and getting the best possible utilization available with this handy tool.

RSVP is required for this event for our meal planning – it will be good! Take a half day off your workweek to join us for this new educational event. The return on participation for test results and knowledge will more than pay for your investment in time.

**SAVE THE DATE! -More info as plans develop: 2020 Annual CEU Conference**

**Friday, January 10, 2020**

**Walker County Storm Shelter**

## **Out of County Events:**

**2019 Texas A&M Turfgrass Field Day**

**Wednesday, October 9, 2019**

**Scotts-MiracleGro Lawn & Garden Research Facility, 3100 F&B Rd, College Station, TX**

**Cost: Participant/\$55.00 person before 9/27 (or) \$65.00 per person between 9/28 & 10/2**

**Registration/More Info: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2902> Contact Alisa Hairston (979) 845-0884 for more info.**

The Texas A&M Turfgrass Field Day offers an opportunity for members of industry and the general public to see and hear about current research activities in the Texas A&M turfgrass program and select related programs in entomology, pathology, and soil science. Attendees will have the opportunity to **earn CEUs** for professional development, visit the trade show floor to see some new products from industry, and enjoy a delicious lunch alongside fellow turf professionals and enthusiasts!

### **Ranchers Leasing Workshop**

**Friday, October 11, 2019**

**8:30 AM -2:30 PM**

**Thomas G Hildebrand Equine Complex (3240 F&B Rd, College Station, TX 77843**

**Cost: \$50.00 Individual/\$80.00 Couple by October 10 (includes lunch)**

**Register <https://agriferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2794>**

Over 800 Texans have participated in these programs over the past two years, 100% would recommend it to a friend! Half-day seminar, participants will be able to ask questions, interact with attorneys and economists. Unique program focusing specifically on grazing, hunting, & livestock leases, including: Legal necessity for having leases in writing, Economic considerations in setting lease rates, Key terms to include in lease arrangements, Landowner liability considerations for landowners and tenants

All participants receive their own copy of the Ranchers' Agricultural Leasing Handbook, which contains checklists and sample lease language.

Program Objectives:

1. Explore the potential economic and strategic benefits of incorporating leases into operation.
2. Understand the importance of reducing agreements to written instrument.
3. Gain basic knowledge of contract law and common lease terminology.
4. Develop strategies to evaluate, negotiate, & draft agricultural lease agreements.
5. Learn basics of landowner liability law and limited liability statutes.

### **2019 Cow Country Congress**

**Friday, October 18, 2019**

**8:00 AM -**

**Stalwart Ranch Weaning Barn, (Hwy 21) Crockett, TX**

**Cost: Includes steak lunch! \$20.00 per person before Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, \$30 after Oct 11th**

**Registration forms are available from the Walker Co AgriLife Office (I can email these also if requested)**

**or Register Online with a Credit Card at: <https://houstoncountyextension.wufoo.com/forms/cow-country-congress-participant-registration/>**

Topics: Bio Security for Your Herd, Immunization & Reproductive Health, Weaning & Marketing more Pounds of Beef, plus there will be a Question & Answer Session with the Experts. Presenters for this educational event will include Mr. Bill Cawley, Ranch Manager, Dr. Michael Allen, Dr. Don Goodman, and Dr. Jason Banta.

### **Ranch Management University**

**October 21 - 25, 2019**

**G. Rollie White Visitor's Center (7707 Raymond Stotzer Pkwy, College Station, TX 77845)**

**Cost: Participant/\$6255.00 person before 10/15**

**Registration/More Info: <https://agriferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2805>**

The Ranch Management University is an intensive 5-day event targeting new or inexperienced ranchers and landowners and covers the fundamentals of soils and soil fertility, forage establishment, pasture

management, and utilization by livestock. Basic livestock management practices such as castrating and vaccinating calves are demonstrated. Grazing management, stocking rate, and body condition scoring are also highlighted. Planning for profit, horse production, financial assistance programs, connections between agriculture and health, fundamentals of lawn management and ag laws Texas landowners need to know will also be discussed. Additionally, several wildlife management topics are covered for those interested in managing white-tailed deer, turkey, quail, feral hogs, and honeybees. Approximately one-half the workshop involves lectures and discussion, with the remainder consisting of the field demonstrations of various how-to methods of soil sampling, calibrating sprayers, and inoculating legume seed. Various forage species, including bermudagrass, small grains, annual ryegrass, and clovers are studied by workshop attendees. A demonstration covering hog trap management will also be given. Plenty of time is allowed for interaction with Texas A&M University faculty with expertise and experience in all management facets of the soil-plant-animal interface and wildlife management.

NOTE: meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks) and a RMU workbook with all Power Point presentations, contact information, glossary, etc. and a flash drive containing hundreds of relevant publications are provided.

## **Texas Fruit Conference**

**October 28 - 29, 2019**

**New Braunfels Civic Convention Center, New Braunfels, TX**

**Cost: Participant/\$100.00 person online before 10/25, \$110 onsite (other options available including tours)**

**Registration/More Info <https://agriferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2907>**

Registration fee includes a "Taste of Texas Fruit Reception" on Monday and lunch both days.

The 8th Annual Texas Fruit Conference offers a combination of fundamental and advanced presentations on fruit growing for Texas conditions. Individuals interested in starting an orchard for fun or for profit will find the program content beneficial. Experienced growers will also benefit from presentations that cover a range of production and marketing topics. Dr. John Clark, Distinguished Professor of Horticulture and blackberry and fruit tree breeder, will be a featured out-of-state speaker.

Texas Fruit Post-Conference Tour (optional) - starting location: Studebaker Farm, 9405 E. U.S. Hwy. 290, Fredericksburg 78624, October 30 (9:30 am-2 pm). Tour sites include commercial orchards and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Viticulture and Fruit Lab with focus on high tunnel production and other protective culture methods for perennial fruit crops.

## **Additional Items and Information of Note:**

### **Producing an "Ideal" Feeder Calf**

Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

A frequent question often asked by new or even some experienced commercial cattle producers is "What is the "best" or "ideal" breed or cross to produce to take to sell?". The answer is "It depends", especially on where you are located. I usually assume that question is about weaned calves sold at the local auction barn and suggest that the producer ask them too. However, since I was asked, my reply is "one that brings the fewest discounts and perhaps a few premiums" or in other words, "the one that brings the highest net return to your operation". Several years ago, someone in the Department of Animal Science came up with a feeder calf formula of sorts that outlined what percent of different breed types were acceptable that would not receive significant price discounts. The flexibility of the varying percentages in this formula allows for different environmental conditions. The percentages went like this:

1. At least ½ half British (Angus, Hereford or Red Angus)
2. No more than ½ Continental European (Charolais, Gelbvieh or Simmental)
3. No more than ¼ Bos indicus (Brahman)
4. No visible evidence of dairy or Longhorn.

At the time this was proposed, nearly 20 years ago, the British contribution added marbling and moderate size while the Continental added growth and muscling. Of course, the British had growth and muscling, just not as much as the Continental. Now they do. The inclusion of ¼ Bos indicus is a given considering our subtropical environment throughout Texas. The minimization of dairy or Longhorn influence was due to reduced feed yard gain and cutability.

Using this formula, a Brahman-Hereford F<sub>1</sub> bred to a British or Continental bull would produce an acceptable feeder calf. All the American breeds (Beefmaster, Braford, Brangus, Santa Gertrudis or Simbrah) would produce acceptable feeder calves when bred to British or Continental bulls. Also, the opposite would work just as well for producing acceptable feeder calves; American breed bulls could be used on straight- and crossbred females of British and Continental breeds, but such females are not as well as adapted to our subtropical conditions. Calves that are easily recognizable in their breed makeup tend to bring fewer discounts than those that are not.

What would receive significant discounts are calves that are high percentage Bos indicus (greater than half). I see the use of Brahman bulls on high percent Bos indicus females in some areas of the coastal plains and realize that, although the females will have value, their steer mates will take a severe discount. The only high percentage Brahman calf that doesn't take a discount is the heifer. They are in great demand in our area. Brahman cattle have a lot to offer us in breed characteristics (hot climate adaptability, resistance to diseases and parasites, and longevity) and in hybrid vigor in crosses (for fertility, maternal ability and growth). But the straight bred or high-percentage steer discount needs to be considered.

However, breed is not the only reason that a calf might not top the market. Muscling and frame (for growth) are still the two most important reasons that calves bring more money. Light muscled or small frame calves are worth less to the buyers. They don't grow as well nor as big and tend to get fat when fed too long. Calves may get discounted if they lack any visible signs of being "worked" such as an ear notch, tag, or a brand. Heavy uncastrated bull calves, those above 500 lbs., can be docked (reduced in price) by \$10 to \$15 per hundredweight (\$50-\$75 per head). Calves that are off colored or have spots can sometimes be discounted since buyers might be concerned about their breed makeup. Generally preferred in many areas are black, red, cream or tan (solid colors with minimal white spotting). Much older cattle can also bring less as can cattle that are over filled (tanked) or extremely emaciated. Cattle with obvious signs of sickness are severely discounted as are wild cattle. Now is the time to review breeding and calf management to avoid significant discounts next fall.

## ***In This Issue:***

### **ADDING AMPERAGE TO YOUR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT.**

**It is rare to immediately know something is going to find its way into a newsletter topic...**

This is the unicorn. Usually it is later when I think to myself, "Hey, that works with this topic". I knew I was going to write something about this one even before the dust cleared (literally). It was just too good to pass up.

And I have too many experiences that fall into the same dusty bucket.

Wildlife management during the late summer includes several active management practices or "tools" which require you to be out and about so that you can see what is going on in the field. Of course, when

the late summer heat and lack of rain join forces, dust becomes one the environmental conditions that you deal with.

Sometimes you have so many occurrences that you end up coated in layers. I've noticed dust is a reoccurring item mentioned in several of my stories.

I have written previous short essays or stories if you want to call them that revolving around themes of wildlife management (July 2018/Food Plots, June 2018/Feral Hogs, March 2018/General Wildlife Management, January 2017/Prescribed Fire, October 2015/Quail). I guess wildlife management was really on my mind due to our educational series we held through early 2018. In this installment I want to pick up on items referred to back in portions of each of these previous articles and "tie additional knots" to help join them just a bit more. I encourage you to go back and review the previous articles for detail: <https://walker.agrilife.org/agricultural-program-news/>

### **ADDING AMPERAGE TO YOUR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT.**

By Reggie Lepley

I don't like electricity. Something that bites and can't be seen is not anything I want to play with. I don't know how many times I have heard an electrician say, "It's not the voltage you need to be worried about, it's the amperage that will get you".

Basically, amperage is the strength of electric current. That is the short version.

I have a buddy who still laughs uncontrollably when he remembers me checking a deer feeder years ago. We used to build our own timers and feeder clocks. Remember Radio Shack? Parts could be obtained easily.

I was about to check the feeder clock to see if it was working properly. As I opened the door to the clock and battery, I was swarmed by several dozen unhappy red wasps from inside the housing box. The entire feeder was homemade, and my housing box was large enough to hold a full-size car battery with plenty of room to spare. Back then you couldn't easily buy the small 12-volt feeder batteries we have today.

Anyway.

I slammed the door shut and retreated quickly to the truck for a can of wasp spray.

Since the box holding the battery and timer was so large, there was a considerable space which I couldn't see into with out getting much too close. I gave them about a ½ can of wasp spray to swim in and shut the door again.

After about a minute, I figured the wasp activity should be reduced to the point it was "safe". I opened the door, reached in and tripped the feed switch. Come to find out, "safe" was a relevant term.

I should have waited.

BWOOOM! A fireball of flame erupted and shot straight out of that box. It never occurred to me that the fumes from the aerosol wasp spray could be a problem, or that the homemade timer/battery/connection may arc. Those conditions meeting up in the same location at the same time produced a spectacularly memorable event.

I ducked and covered!

After getting up off the ground, I realized that I had no hair on the back of my hand and halfway up to my elbow. Thankfully no burns, and I still had my eyebrows. It's a good thing since Patrick McManus has already used that story title with his black powder rifle.

The wiring inside the feeder box was on fire and the plastic insulation on all the wires was melting off. The timer was even on fire. We had to smother it all with a rag to put the fire out. My buddy was steadily laughing uncontrollably.

He still had hair on his arm.

Feeding wildlife can have multiple purposes, benefits, and results. I have always liked the movie classic, "The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly". That title fits the subject of feeding stations for wildlife. For the duration of this article keep in mind when I mention deer, we could just as easily be talking about other wildlife species with a bit of modification.

Wildlife or Deer feeders can hit all those descriptive categories. The Good: Yes, you can provide energy or protein sources depending on time of year and need which can benefit your wildlife populations. Yes, you can utilize them as attractant locations for viewing or harvest purposes. The Bad: Yes, they will attract/supplement possibly unwanted species. Yes, they possibly may attract or concentrate predator species. The Ugly: Yes, they could also potentially increase the transmission of disease among species due to their attracting and concentration of susceptible animals. There is also the possibility of contaminated or toxic "feed stuff" material to be aware of containing aflatoxins.

Choose your management tools wisely. Be aware of the consequences.

I will reiterate a quote utilized in my March 2018 article as it is very applicable: *"If the land mechanism as a whole is good then every part is good, whether we understand it or not...To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."* – Aldo Leopold

The selection of a tool requires an established working set of plans. Identify your final product/goal and open the toolbox(s) that will let you build what you want to accomplish. Texas Parks & Wildlife has an excellent set of guidelines that will help you choose your tools and develop your plan. Do an online search for [Wildlife Management Activities and Practices for the Pineywoods Ecological Region](#).

Food plots for wildlife are also popular management tools and September through early October is prime time to be thinking about implementation. You need to be making your cool season forage plan now.

I like food plot diversity and I like to "hedge" a few bets on this subject. But..., with that said, be careful to not fall into some of the commercial convenience traps. Not every plant species is suitable for every location found through the geographic variety and climates of the U.S. or even Texas for that matter. If you are considering a commercially blended product of forage species – read the label, know what will grow where you are planting. One of the better collections of whitetail deer food plot DIY "recipes" can be reviewed at: <https://agrifecdn.tamu.edu/overton/files/2015/12/Supplemental-Forage-Management-for-East-Texas-White-tails.pdf> The list would change a bit if you were working with birds



or other species. My point is to be familiar with your location and the needs/biology of your managed species.

August and early September is also prime time for deer counts. There are a variety of tools in this general box of resources which can be utilized to help make management decisions and track trends among your wildlife population.

Current count numbers may or may not mean a lot by themselves other than a documentation of “this is what I know on this day”. Take that information and add it to additional observations; compile and document. Build a data source that over time will provide to illustrate trends or changes.

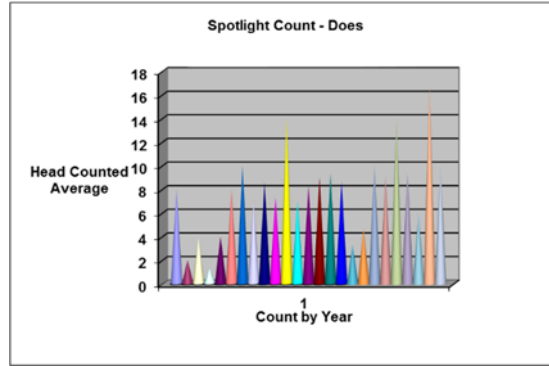
You can document deer populations with wildlife cameras, track counts, incidental observations, hunter/stand observations, highline counts, aerial counts, and spotlight counts. Then there are related tools such as browse counts, etc. which may happen at various times of the year. These each have their specific protocols, place, and locations where they can be beneficial and useful. Not all these tools will work everywhere with every species.

We utilize spotlight counts as a tool starting in August for whitetail deer. I really like the trend information that spotlight counts provide over time for specific properties. What follows is an example of individual data sets vs. trends:

|  | Date      |           |          | Averages     |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|
|  | 8/16/2019 | 8/30/2019 | 9/6/2019 |              |
| <b>Bucks</b>   | 2.00      | 2.00      | 3.00     | <b>2.33</b>  |
| <b>Does</b>  | 12.00     | 8.00      | 10.00    | <b>10.00</b> |
| <b>Unknown</b>   | 2.00      | 0.00      | 2.00     | <b>1.33</b>  |
| <b>Fawns</b>   | 2.00      | 4.00      | 2.00     | <b>2.67</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 18        | 14        | 17       | <b>16.33</b> |
| <b>Est Acres/Deer</b>  | 46.58     | 59.89     | 49.33    | <b>51.34</b> |
| <b>Est Deer Population</b>   | 33.49     | 26.05     | 31.63    | <b>30.39</b> |
| <b>Notes: coyote population is UP. Pigs seen on 2 of 3 counts. Armadillo #s are UP. Rabbit #s are UP. Deer that were seen on all 3 spotlight counts were mostly bedded down.</b> |           |           |          |              |

This set of spotlight count data doesn't really tell us a lot individually by day or possibly even as a year set. This is just what we happened to see this year on those nights. It gives us an idea of the numbers of animals on the property but there is still a lot of uncertainty. We know this because the incidental observations on the same property are adding up to a larger number of animals of all classes being seen during the day over the same time period. There was more movement during the day than at night -the notation of bedded deer during the night counts helps demonstrate this point of observation. Remember all the rain this spring? Deer bedded in tall grass at night are hard to see.

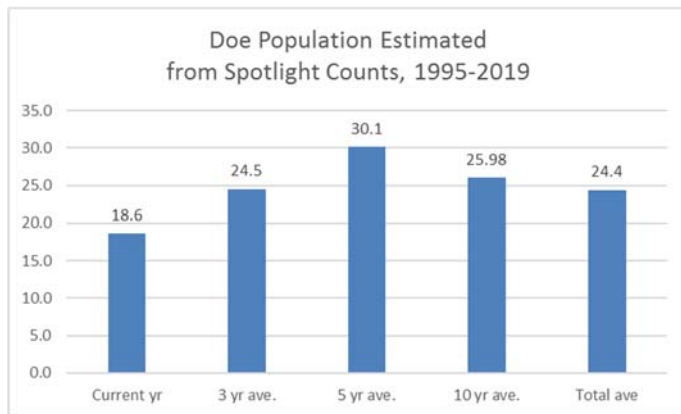
To take my point a bit further, here is another example. This chart illustrates the doe class counted during each of the yearly spotlight aggregates over the past 24 years.



This does provide a visual reference of year to year fluctuation and possible cyclic activity. Viewing the data in this form begins to tell us more detail about the population trends.

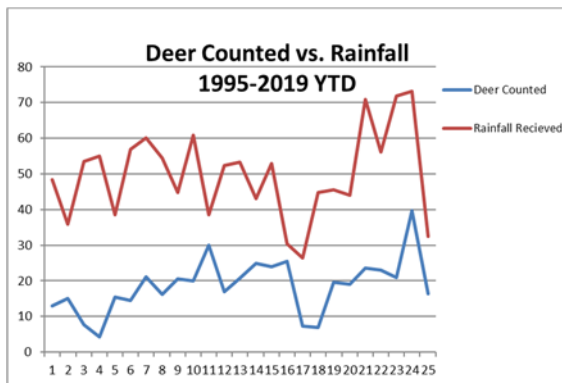
What if? What if we looked at groupings of years utilizing average data?

This chart, utilizing the same data as before but separated into current year data, and averages of 3, 5, 10, and Total Cumulative data lets us interpret even a bit more of what is going on based on time periods.



Back in my 2015 quail article, I included a graph and mention of how rainfall correlates to wildlife populations in various ways.

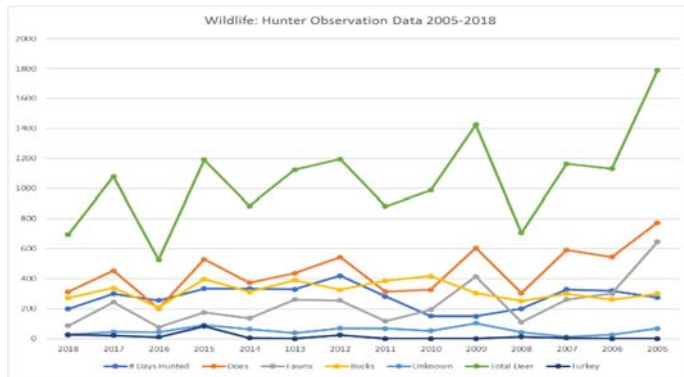
That still holds true by my collected data.



I recently obtained a thirteen-year set of stand/hunter observation data from another source (different property). It was presented by individual years. I started wondering what it would look like if it was compiled into a complete data set.

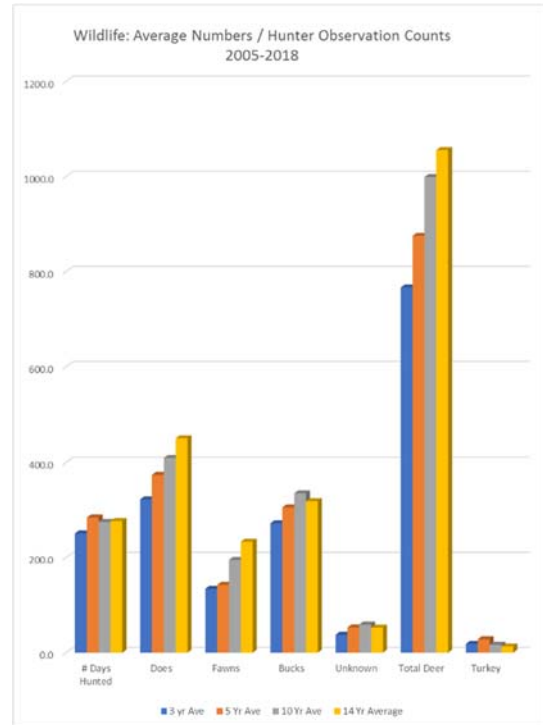
So, I moved the numbers into one big chart which could be visually graphed together.

In a simple line graph (below), the hunter observation data is just all over the place. But when grouped and viewed as sets of information the visual changes for the same data:



In this case, I can make the (partial) argument that current management seems to be working.

The management goal on this second property is to increase quality and age structure of the buck population via reducing total overall numbers of deer.



Reducing total numbers (does) provides reduced nutritional resource pressure and brings the buck doe ratio closer to the “idea” 1:1 or 1:2 (ish) depending on the property goals. This data set doesn’t document those additional specific questions.

What is missing here is browse count data telling us the utilization levels of available plant species and harvest data which would tell us about the age structure and other specific details about the herd population on a whole for this particular property. Browse count data would tell us about the pressure being exerted on the food sources for that property. There are lots of moving parts to wildlife management.

Counting deer at night almost always has its real interesting moments. Back to that part of the equation.

The landowner and I have had two deer on two different counts (several years apart) run toward us when the light found them. I remember on one occasion hanging all the way out of the Kawasaki Mule we were in and shining the light down at the ground below me in an attempt to allow the deer to SEE US while waving my arms and hollering so that she wouldn’t load up in the mule with us.

I thought she really wanted to go for a ride. I could have touched her before she turned away.

You may remember the notation from the 2019 count data mentioning coyote numbers. We saw notable numbers during each spotlight session this year. The most interesting one was when we found two coyotes circling a pond. After encouraging them to leave we drove up to the pond and a 2-year-old buck swam out and onto the bank about 12 feet from us.

I think he thought the coyotes “got” him - he was going to the light.

The coyotes had either ambushed the deer at waters edge or had chased him into the pond and were waiting to open the buffet when we arrived.

That was something I had never seen before.

On the third count of the year, we had battery troubles. It happens. The mule died on us twice. You don't want to take anyone with you that fears the dark. On more than one occasion over the years, I have had to walk out from somewhere not close to the truck. Be sure to keep a good flashlight handy...

The first time we lost battery power, allowing the ride to sit for a few minutes and cool the battery was all it took. Fired right back up. Just keep it revved up and you are good to go... Those familiar with Kawasaki Mules know you really must give them the gas and work the pedal to get them running. UDENNNNN, UDENNNN!

In addition to all this, the dust was so thick that you had to keep moving or you couldn't see anything with the lights. If you slowed down, the dust would envelop you and reflect any light right back at you. By the end of the night, the guy in the back seat was heaving to breath and sounded like he had a case of asthma going.

The second time our ride died that night, we were even further away from the truck. In the dark.

Luckily on this excursion I had a couple of industrious buddies with me. Prior to the second count of the year, we had previously placed a truck battery in the bed of the mule before figuring out that all our alligator clamp wires and 12 volt plug splitters for the spotlights had burned up and were no good.

The battery never was taken out of the mule and put up. It was still there. Yeah! We got lucky.

But the truck battery was too big to swap out with the mule battery. And there was no trace of a set of jumper cables to be found. But we found almost the next best thing.

Laying in the bed of the mule was a 2-foot piece of Romex wire. The kind you would use in your house to feed electrical plugs. After skinning both ends and separating the wires (in the dark), we discovered it wasn't going to be quite that easy.

If you have worked on a mule, you know that you must lift the front seat to access the battery on the newer models. And there isn't any room on the battery terminal toward the front of the mule for access. You can just barely get your hand down in there.

Buddy number one says, "I'll hold this end on these terminals and you hold that end on those terminals".

Okay...may work.

So, we tell buddy number two: "You have to work the key & the gas pedal". Again, if you are familiar with the layout of a mule, you know there is no room up front when the seat is up. By this point, buddy number two is standing on one leg reaching pretty much behind himself in the dark to put the other leg on the gas and his hand on the key at the same time.

I was on the very enclosed and cramped side of the battery connection with my hand down in the hole I can't see. About this time, I'm thinking, "is this going to arc and zap me?" Remember my electrical relationship, we are a product of our lifetime of experiences. How many cranking amps does a truck battery have; Oh heck...

For what it's worth, buddy number two was the one that watched me blow up the deer feeder. He mentioned it about that time and started laughing.

Buddy number one is now in the back seat holding the truck battery so the short piece of Romex will reach the mule battery while trying to keep the ends of the wire on the terminals. I remember number two, telling number one that "if this works, I'll kiss your (*foot*)". Yeah, he said it.

*You know I changed the wording there.*

When the connection was made, the Romex got HOT! Sparks flew a time or two. But it worked. The mule started and I purposely never asked about the kissing part later.

On the way back I told them I was going to write this one up. I did promise not to use any names, just because...

If you have questions or would like more information regarding Extension Educational Programs, call us at (936) 435-2426.



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