



LEE COUNTY WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION



2016 Fall Newsletter

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TPWD Chronic Wasting Disease Update.

By: Laura Sherrod

Have you seen any deer on the side of the road marked with an orange "X" in Lee County? I have had several reports of people wondering if there is a new cult or some other strange behavior with road killed deer. Rest assured – this is just your local wildlife biologist testing to make sure the deer in Lee county are disease-free! If you are interested in having your hunter-harvested deer tested or see fairly fresh road killed deer, please see the end of this article for my contact information.

By now I'm sure that many people have heard about CWD, or chronic wasting disease, in deer populations. While not a brand new disease, the disease was found in central Texas last year for the first time.

During the summer of 2015, CWD was found in a captive white-tailed deer breeding facility in Medina county through routine testing of deceased animals. One of the concerning issues is that this was a big facility that bought and sold many deer. In looking at the last 5 years, at least 728 different locations around Texas received deer from this facility—that means deer were sent to other breeding facilities, DMP pens, and released into wild populations. Rigorous testing procedures have been put into place, and CWD was also discovered in Lavaca county in another captive deer breeding facility that received deer directly from the Medina county facility. To date, approximately 25 CWD positive deer have been found in deer breeding facilities.

Chronic wasting disease is a TSE that infects cervids, including white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, red deer, sika, and moose. An infected animal can take months or years to show symptoms,

and it can take years for the disease to kill the animal. However, it is 100% fatal, and there is no genetic immunity, meaning any deer can be infected. Some of the classic symptoms of CWD are emaciation, drooling, staggering, disorientation, walking in circles, etc. Please keep in mind that these symptoms are common to several diseases and even head trauma! Just because you see an animal acting this way does not mean it has chronic wasting disease, but it would be wise to let me or the game warden know if you see an animal displaying symptoms such as these.

The big question that most have is: Is CWD dangerous to humans? The short answer is that there is no evidence at this point that CWD can infect people. That being said, this is a relatively "young" disease that is still being studied. Both CDC and WHO recommend that people do not consume meat from infected animals. In general, it is wise to avoid consuming any type of sick animal. Try to harvest and eat those that look healthy. If you have concerns, please feel free to contact me.

While the deer breeders in Texas have new requirements for testing for CWD, TPWD biologists such as myself have also been testing many deer since the discovery last summer. TPWD biologists tested over 10,000 deer last year, which includes hunter harvested and road killed deer. So far, we have not seen evidence of CWD spreading into the wild populations of deer. So, if you saw any strange deer on the side of the road with a big orange "X" on them, that was just me making sure that animal did not have CWD! I had such a good network of people letting me know about road killed deer that I needed to start marking those that had already been tested to avoid going to the same deer multiple times. I would like to say thank you to all those that alerted me to road killed deer and submitted their harvested deer for testing. We have not had any positives in Lee county!

Annual Lee County Youth Shooting Event

The Lee County Wildlife Association together with the Texas Parks & Wildlife, host each year the Lee County Youth Shoot Event. This shooting and hunter safety program; geared toward middle and high school students is held at the Nails Creek Park on Lake Somerville. Unfortunately, with this years flooding, the event was pushed back to *late* March/*early* April 2017. This event runs for two days with the Lee County students on the first day, and Washington County students and their volunteers on the second day. We can accommodate up to 80 students each day. Every student is given the opportunity to shoot archery, shotgun, pistol and rifles, including black powder, in a safe and controlled situation. This year we added two additional stations, trapping and herpetology.

Students have a great time and volunteers feel very rewarded. It takes about 25 volunteers each day to make this event happen. Additional volunteers are always welcomed! If interested, please give me a call, Trevor Dickschat, Extension Agent-Lee County at 979-542-2753 or contact one of the LCWA directors. Some firearm experience is preferred but not required.

The expense of this event is paid for through grants received from the local chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, private donations, Dime Box Sportsman's Club and Tejas Trading Post has also been a big help with ammunition and targets.

Food Plots

A great way to enhance plots is to provide a transition zone between the edge of the woods and the open food plots so deer feel comfortable moving through screening cover from the woods to the feeding area. Allow one or two disc-widths of native vegetation to grow between the food plot and the hard cover to provide secondary cover. Also consider setting aside at least 1 acre for every 100 acres of habitat in cool season food plots as "sanctuary plots" that are never hunted.

This sounds obvious but it has to be mentioned. Do whatever's necessary to keep this plot out of sight from neighbors or anyone driving down the road. Not only do you want to keep others from seeing your plot but you want to make it as comfortable for the deer as possible. When you have a plot well hidden the deer become used to going there during the day light hours and not being bothered.

Of all the small grains, deer prefer oats when given a choice. Be sure to select winter hardy oat varieties to plant because they will provide the bulk of the forage available from first frost until spring green-up.

Texas Brigades

By: Trevor Dickschat



The Texas Brigades is a wildlife-focused and leadership development program for high school youth (ages 13-17). There are six different camps: Bobwhite Brigade, Buckskin Brigade, Bass Brigade, Waterfowl Brigade, Ranch Brigade, and Coastal Brigade. You will be introduced to habitat management, improve your communication skills, and develop a land ethic. The state's leading wildlife and fisheries biologists and land managers serve as instructors and mentors. Each camp is 4 ½ days long.

The camps are held on private ranches and at environmental camps in different areas of the state. In addition to learning animal anatomy and behavior, botany, nutrition, habitat management, population dynamics, etc., you will learn valuable leadership skills. You will write news releases, practice public speaking, and find out how to handle radio and television interviews. Through these activities, you will develop valuable life skills that will help you regardless of your career goals.

If you are interested in biology, conservation, leadership, or just appreciate the outdoors, you should consider applying to one of our camps. Find a career, meet new friends, and become an ambassador for conservation.

HOW MANY CADETS ARE AT THE CAMP?

Each camp is a little different because of facilities. There will be 20-30 cadets at each.

WHERE WILL THE CAMPS BE HELD?

Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade - Centennial Lodge, Coleman, TX
South Texas Buckskin Brigade - Welder Wildlife Refuge, Sinton, TX
South Texas Bobwhite Brigade - Buck Horn Creek Ranch, McCoy, TX
Bass Brigade - Warren Ranch, Santa Anna, TX
Ranch Brigade - Warren Ranch, Santa Anna, TX
North Texas Buckskin Brigade - Warren Ranch, Santa Anna, TX
Waterfowl Brigade - BigWoods on the Trinity, Tennessee Colony, TX
Coastal Brigade - Sea Scout Base, Galveston, TX



Ranch Brigade

Embracing Prescribe Fire in 2016-17

Morgan Russell-Extension Range Specialist

Fire is fire. With that said, I can tell you fire is the answer but the problem is in the questions.

Is it a wildfire or prescribed burn? The biggest question for range managers is: How does fire (planned or unplanned) fit into your ranch plan?

Fire is a naturally occurring process that is not centered on if, but when, it will happen on rangeland. As rangeland managers, we have the choice as to the type of fire that occurs in our pastures. Waiting for a wildfire is neither a good offense nor a good defense, similar to the old Marine philosophy, "Which mountain do you want to die on?" It boils simply down to proactive versus reactive attitudes and perspectives.

I don't want to oversimplify the decision of planning prescribed fires, or being a victim to wildfire, but wildfires burn out at prescribed fires. Try the Bastrop Complex Fire in 2011 on for size, when wildfire severity and effects at Bastrop State Park were greatly minimized from a previously conducted prescribed burn in 2010.

Most producers are hesitant to adopt prescribed burning because of the misconception their grazing operation suffers. However, fire and grazing are natural and symbiotic processes in maintaining productive grassland and savannah plant communities. Active fire suppression has been recognized as a key disruptive force in rangeland ecosystem integrity throughout North American rangelands and the world.

Before European settlement and their introduction of domestic livestock grazing practices, native plant communities were maintained by periodic fires and the grazing patterns of native wildlife. Early Native Americans observed that buffalo consumed mostly grass and preferred areas dominated by grass.

They also realized fire was needed to maintain open prairies. Fire was an important tool to manipulate the vegetation with the purpose of improving habitat.

Sparking Productivity: Fires ecological effects are numerous and complex. Fire can manipulate nutrient dynamics, soils, vegetation, grazing patterns and grazing behavior of animals. Primary factors affecting plant community response are timing, frequency and intensity of fire relative to the biology and origin of the flora and fauna examined. Generally speaking, with average precipitation, native perennial grass productivity typically increases with average growing conditions following a low-intensity fire.

Fire causes an immediate reduction of standing dead material and litter, which presents a loss in forage in the short term. However, with average annual precipitation, the reduction in litter can alter light and moisture relations at the soil surface, promoting increased herbaceous

productivity and discouraging the establishment of non-native species. Reduction of standing dead material and litter, as well as improved forage quality of new plant growth, attracts grazing animals to recently burned sites.

Response to fire can be species-specific, allowing targeted control of undesirable and woody species such as prickly pear cactus, eastern red cedar and blueberry juniper. Prescribed fire has been shown to be the most efficient and economical method for controlling invasive, non-sprouting native juniper. Intense and frequent fire can result in a direct reduction in canopy cover of woody plants by killing, injuring or reducing trees to smaller-size classes.

Following fire, browsing animals may further inhibit recovery of woody plant species due to increased accessibility and palatability. As an evolutionary process, fire cannot be substituted with any other management option, the combination of grazing and fire epitomizes the most natural symbiotic relationship on rangelands.

After a fire, keep in mind that prescribed burning is not a one-time, cure-all, silver-bullet treatment but a routine program that must be maintained. Fire frequency is the key to success. Native rangeland vegetation is adapted to periodic burning. However, fires can be destructive if proper management is not followed before and after the prescribed burn.

Livestock and wildlife are easily attracted to recently burned areas and can overgraze the burned area if given the opportunity. Rangeland recovery following a prescribed burn is a key element that goes hand-in-hand with a properly planned, timed and executed prescribed burn.

Prescribed fire in Texas and elsewhere faces an uncertain future. Historic use of prescribed fire by ranchers has never been widespread; however, with the rapid increase in population and increased "urbanization" of rangeland, air quality concerns, county officials quick to implement burn bans, new landowners who don't understand the ranching culture and lack the experience and background to appreciate the value of fire, etc., the implementation of fire will be even more difficult in the future.

However, these potential problems should not lessen our enthusiasm for prescribed fire. In fact, now is the time to innovate in the use of prescribed fire. Members of the Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association in Texas have successfully burned approximately 1 million acres of rangeland. Join a prescribed burn association, participate on other burns and attend certified prescribed burn schools.

I hope that this article will spark a better understanding for the problems facing the continued use of prescribed fire, fan a greater appreciation for the future role fire should play in your region and re-ignite the fire culture that manipulated such a basic, natural tool to historically make our rangelands profitable and sustainable.

Lee County Prescribed Burn Seminar

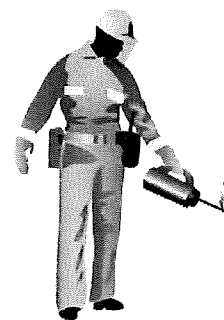
Thursday, December 15, 2016

Registration Time 8:00 AM - 8:30 AM

Program Starts at 8:30 AM

Location: Lee County Extension Office

310 South Grimes, Giddings Tx. 78942



8:00 -8:30	Registration and Welcome - <i>Trevor Dickschat</i>
8:30 - 9:20	Laws and Regulations: <i>David Veale, TPWD</i>
9:20-9:30	Break
9:30- 10:00	Establishing a Burn Plan: <i>David Veale, TPWD</i>
10:00 - 10:20	Insurance Policies: <i>Farm Bureau</i>
10:20-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Prescribe Burn Weather and Safety- <i>Greg Pleasant, TPWD</i>
11:30-12:00	Prescribe Burning for Wildlife- <i>Greg Pleasant, TPWD</i>
12-12:30	Evaluation and Hand out Certificates

**3 CEUs
Offered**

-1 Laws and Regs
-2 General

**Breakfast and
Coffee Included**

\$15 Charge

**RSVP by Monday December 12 to
the Lee County Extension Office:**

Trevor Dickschat


979-542-2753

CEA - ANR

trevor.dickschat@ag.tamu.edu

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Mark Your Calendars

Lee County Wildlife Association

High School Scholarship

Deadline - Friday, January 6

Any interested seniors may contact the LC Extension office or a Lee County school counselor for application.

Food Plot Seed Reimbursement

Deadline - Monday, January 30

Seed must be planted in Lee County to qualify. Receipts can be delivered to the Extension office at 310 S. Grimes, 78942.

Annual Meeting Photo Contest

Photo deadline - Monday, January 30

Prizes will be awarded for first, second & third place. For more information contact Laura Sherrod at laura.sherrod@tpwd.texas.gov.

LCWA - Annual Meeting/Fundraiser

Friday, February 3rd

5:00 pm-Raffles & Exhibits open

6:30-Meal

Sons of Hermann - Giddings

Come share the outdoor experience with family & friends at the LCWA Annual Meeting/Fundraiser. As always a delicious ribeye meal with trimmings will be served. Arrive early to purchase tickets for all the great raffle & auction items!



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