

the state

Texas deer population declining

By HARVEY LAAS
Special to the Battalion



Both weight and antler size of mature white-tail bucks throughout Texas have grown steadily smaller over the past two decades.

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

The quality of the white-tailed deer population in parts of Texas has gradually declined for a number of years. The decline is a problem not only from an aesthetic viewpoint, but also in terms of economics.

It is true that most hunters will probably not stop hunting because the deer are small. But there is always cause for concern when members of a species begin to get smaller. The decline has been in body and antler size.

Two factors have been linked to the decline of white-tailed deer: poor nutrition and genetic selection toward smaller deer.

Research into these problems is being conducted at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area near Kerrville in the Hill Country.

Bob Armstrong, wildlife biologist at the Kerr area, said that deer need at least 10-11 percent protein in their diet for proper growth. Armstrong said the Kerr Area conducted a program raising a number of bucks of 10 percent protein and then reduced it to 8 percent. This resulted in reduced antler size and fewer points.

Since antler development is at least in part a reflection of general health, one can see the effect even a small drop in protein can cause.

The protein deficiency is caused by a number of factors. One is that there are too many deer in many of the former hunting areas. Another is competition with domestic livestock. These two problems are often interrelated.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has been working with landowners in an effort to overcome these problems.

Jim Yantis is a wildlife technician with the department stationed in the Brazos area. He said that few understand the nutritional requirements of deer, because deer eat little grass. A white-tail deer's main food sources are forbs (small broad-leaf plants) and browse (the tips and leaves of brush). Thus, one problem has been the need to educate people about the requirements of deer.

Sheep and goats compete more directly with deer because their food habits are more closely related. Landowners who wish to have sheep and goats, as well as deer, must keep this in mind when deciding how much livestock to raise, Merrill said.

Brazos County does not have an overpopulation problem, Yantis said the population here has been slowly declining since around 1970. He said that hunting has not been a cause of the decline, but that a number of things have contributed.

Destruction of habitat appears to be one of the main contributors, he said. The urbanization of the county and the clearing of land for improved pasture are responsible for the loss of habitat. The number of cattle has also increased, adding to competition.

Yantis said that a rise in the coyote population has also caused increased predation on the young deer in Brazos County as well as other parts of the state. It is not known how much effect coyotes have, but it is believed that they affect a deer population's ability to bounce back after losses.

Although Brazos County does not have an overpopulation of deer, the situation is different in Robertson County, located immediately to the north. It has a great number of deer.

Under these circumstances, it is usually recommended that some doe hunting be permitted. The Parks and Wildlife Department does not have jurisdiction to set limits in all counties. In some counties the commissioners court has this power.

This is the case in Robertson County. Many landowners there and throughout the rest of the state still feel doe hunting is bad. As Yantis pointed out, many people feel it is wrong to hunt does because of tradi-

tion. However, their grandfathers hunted does because it was normal practice in those times. Buck hunting started more recently when deer populations were greatly reduced in the 1930s by overgrazing.

Others believe that there are not as many deer now as in the past. Yantis said that in some cases this is true, but the habitat may have changed due to more cattle being

introduced or improved pasture. This means that the land can support fewer deer. Also, human nature can come into play.

Because does are not hunted, many areas have a population imbalance, with does out numbering bucks five to one.

Yantis said this causes populations to go through boom and bust cycles. If, during one year, range conditions are particularly good there will be a large fawn crop. This cycle will repeat itself as long as an imbalance exists. If there is a better balance between bucks and does, the population will be more stable because it will not be capable of large leaps in production.

It is a widely held belief that spikes, deer with unbranched antlers, are yearlings which will develop larger antlers later. Armstrong said this is not the case. Studies at the Kerr area and elsewhere have shown that spikes are caused by poor nutrition and genetics.

Two factors have been linked to the decline of white-tailed deer: poor nutrition and genetic selection toward smaller deer.

High Quality
Quick Service
No Minimums
Large Orders
Legal Size 4 1/2¢

Reductions & Dissertations
Collation & Binding & Padding

WE HAVE A XEROX 9400 — THE BEST COPYING MACHINE IN THE WORLD!

Kinko's Graphics, Inc.
201 College Main St. (713)846-9508



The Corps of Cadets gets its news from the Batt.

LULAC demands query

Special ed policy attacked

United Press International
BROWNWOOD — The League of United Latin American Citizens Monday demanded an investigation of the Brownwood school district, alleging its special education department was a dumping ground for Mexican-American children.

The Hispanic civil rights group, acting on the complaint of three special education teachers who resigned in protest, said many non-English speaking students were being assigned to the department because they could not pass examinations written only in English.

LULAC said the policy bolstered the enrollment in the department designed for handicapped students, which resulted in

higher state and federal payments for the subsidized program.

The complaint alleged that despite state law, parents of Spanish-speaking children — often unable to speak English themselves — were given consent forms to sign that were in English only.

The teacher-LULAC complaints claimed that many students were placed in special education even though they had passed the evaluation tests. The complaints also alleged there were no Spanish-speaking teachers in the special education department.

The teachers, Rayla Stiles, Patricia Roberts and Rebecca Cole resigned Oct. 1, in protest of the

conditions but the Board of Education refused to accept their resignations because they would not stay until replacements were found.

The board is now attempting to have the teachers' certifications revoked because of their failure to be at work.

LULAC said it would defend the teachers in any action taken against them by the district.

LULAC also said it had asked the education committees of the Legislature to investigate wrongdoing by the school. The complaints also were filed with the new U.S. Department of Education, the Texas education department and the regional civil rights office.

MSC TOWN HALL

present

Mon., November 26
8:15 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium

CHICAGO

THE MUSICAL SMASH HIT!



	gen'l public	student
Zone I	8 ²⁵	7 ²⁵
Zone II	7 ⁰⁰	6 ⁰⁰
Zone III	5 ⁷⁵	4 ⁷⁵

for more info.
call 845-2916



Next time you're in Mexico, stop by and visit the Cuervo fabrica in Tequila.

Since 1795 we've welcomed our guests with our best. A traditional taste of Cuervo Gold.

Visitors to Cuervo have always been greeted in a special way. They're met at the gates and invited inside to experience the unique taste of Cuervo Gold. This is the way we've said "welcome" for more than 180 years. And it is as traditional as Cuervo Gold itself. For this dedication to tradition is what makes Cuervo Gold truly special. Neat, on the rocks, with a splash of soda, in a truly Sunrise or Margarita, Cuervo Gold will bring you back to a time when quality ruled the world.

Cuervo. The Gold standard since 1795.



CUERVO ESPECIAL® TEQUILA. 80 PROOF. IMPORTED AND BOTTLED BY © 1978 HEUBLEIN, INC., HARTFORD, CONN.

ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR

Sign Ups November 19
December 5-6
Rudder Mall

Sponsored By
MSC CRAFTS AND ARTS COMMITTEE
Sign Ups in Craft Shop
\$5.00 per booth (2 days)

For Information Call:
845-1631

