

Fall hunting season is here

by Hal Spain

Once again we are coming up on another hunting season, and this year's prognosis is far superior to any I've had the opportunity to preview in the past couple of years.

Range conditions have made a vast improvement over the droughty conditions we have experienced the past several years. What is different about this year is adequate moisture during the spring and a nice 3" to 6" infusion of storms in July, when we least expect it. August started out on the dry side; however, some nice general rains during September and October have put our native pastures and wheat pastures in pristine condition, at least compared to previous years. As I write this on October 15, the county has received from 1.5 up to and over 4 inches of general moisture, with the promise of more the next couple of days. Needless to say, our producers are once again optimistic concerning the coming year and what it will bring.

One semi negative note regarding all this moisture is the lack of runoff this rainfall has produced. Most of the rainfall has been slow and steady, which is good for crops and pastures, but doesn't improve the outlook for raising the levels on area lakes and stock tanks.

We are nearing the end of a fairly successful dove season, due the presence of white wings and collared dove. I still don't think we've gotten an influx of northern birds, which usually raises the number of birds in the hunting bags.

With all this moisture, I'm afraid that early season bow hunting has been pretty hit and miss. Due to the abundance of feed in pastures, I am not seeing many bucks coming to feed, and this has probably impacted our bow hunting efforts to date.

For the first time in several years, I think we will see a good number of horns (antlers) harvested during the approaching gun season. We may have to wait till after frost to get these big deer up and moving around. I don't know what effect it will have on deer season, but I have seen some signs that some of this cooler weather has already started the rut. Whether or not this will pay off during the season is the big question. We're all hoping that the rut is not finished before we get a crack at hunting some bucks that may be chasing does.

I have seen quite a few turkey so far this fall, and I am hoping this trend will continue on into the regular season. This also might be a good year to try your luck during the spring turkey season, as I think we have raised some birds this year.

Being a quail hunter, I keep

up with all the predictions from around the state. Most areas are still not predicting enough numbers to hunt. The bright side concerning quail is that I think we have had a late hatch this year, which we hope will impact numbers in succeeding years.

As to seasons, dove season runs through October 23, 2013. The winter short seasons runs from December 20, 2013, through January 5, 2014, with a daily bag limit of 15 in the central zone, which includes Coke County.

Archery season for deer and turkey will close on November 1, 2014, with no antlerless permit required except on MLD properties. The general deer and turkey season will run from November 2, 2013 through January 5, 2014. The special late general season will run from January 6 - 19, 2014, for antlerless and spike bucks only. The bag limit for deer

is 5, with no more than 2 bucks, all seasons combined.

Turkey season will run concurrently with deer season, November 2, 2013 through January 5, 2014. Spring turkey season has been set for March 29 through May 11, 2014, gobblers or bearded hens only, with a bag limit of 4 (all seasons combined).

Quail season will run statewide October 26, 2013 through February 23, 2014, with a daily bag limit of 15 and a possession limit of 45.

Legal shooting hours for all game animals and nonmigratory game birds are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunting stamp endorsement which are required in addition to your license include an archery stamp - \$7; migratory game birds - \$7; upland game birds - \$7; and a federal migratory game bird (duck stamp) - \$17.

Hunting Lease License



Photo Courtesy 700 Springs Ranch

(Types 132, 133, and 134)

Required of a landowner or landowner's agent who leases hunting rights to another person on property they own or control for pay or other consideration. The license must be displayed on the property.

License fee: \$79 for 1 - 499 acres; \$147 for 500 - 999 acres; or \$252 for 1,000 acres or more: Note - Recordbook no longer required.

In closing, we want you to have a wonderful time during your stay in our area. Please remember that you are ambassadors for all of us involved in the hunting and outdoor industries. Don't forget to think SAFETY every time you handle a firearm, and make proper gun handling and safe shooting a part of your everyday life at home or in the field. Have a safe and successful season.

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