

Fall hunting season is upon us

By Hal Spain

It's that time again, and the prospects for good deer hunting this year in Coke and surrounding counties are once again through the roof. Mother Nature is the primary factor upon which our deer hunting success or failure depends, and conditions this year are excellent. While we have not had as much rainfall as last year's record breaking totals, we are in pretty good shape this year, as the saying goes, for the shape we're in.

Timely rainfall during the year and overall mild temperatures have contributed to what should be an excellent horn (antler) year. The months of August and September alone have yielded over four inches of rainfall each, setting the table for some good conditions going into the winter.

The only negative factor that I can think of is that we didn't have much early wheat planted due to fall army worm concerns. What that means to hunters is that wheat fields will be planted later this year, and much of our wheat grazing will not be available to wildlife and livestock until later on in the late fall and early winter. If you need to harvest some does this year, you may want to wait until a little later in the season to find them on wheat grazing.

The weather has even cooperated with us to a degree this year. We have already had a couple of cold fronts come through, thereby starting an earlier rut. This should mean that there will be some bucks running with does around the start of the season.

It doesn't seem that the good conditions have kept the deer from visiting feeders so far this fall. I talked to a hunter the other day who said that his deer have consumed 300 pounds of corn in about two weeks on his place. He was at the feed store when I talked to him, loading up some more deer corn.

As to seasons, we are at the tail end of a dove season that looked really good before it started. However, mourning dove numbers and harvest totals have been a mixed bag in Coke County depending on the location. In our dove hunting zone in Coke County (Central Zone), the regular season will end November 5, 2017, with the late winter season set for December 15 to January 7, 2018. Daily bag limits for dove are 15, with the possession limit set at three times the daily limit or 45.

Archery season for deer and turkey will close on November 3, 2017, with no antlerless permit required except on MLD properties. The general deer and turkey season will run from November 4, 2017 through January 7, 2018. The special late general season will run from January 8 - 21, 2018 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 4, 2017 through January 7, 2018. Spring turkey season has been set for March 31 through May 13, 2018, gobblers or bearded hens only, with a bag limit of 4 (all seasons combined).

As always, quail season will take a back seat until deer hunting is out of the way in our area. After an unusually good hatch last year, we followed that up locally with another fairly good hatch this year. I'm going to say it was better than most of the reports I am hearing from around the rest of the Rolling Plains and Concho Valley. Quail season will run statewide October 28, 2017 through February 25, 2018, 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 endorsements 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) - \$25.

Hunting Lease License (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 through 499 acres; \$147 for 500 through 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.

Old Man Responses

by Johnny Kirby

There are a couple of items that I feel compelled to respond to. First is the total hype advertising from Nosler. The ad says in bold type that their 26 and 28 Nosler cartridges shoot "flat out to 450 yards." Anyone who has any experience with ballistics knows that this is total BS. Unless Nosler has figured out a way to defy the force of gravity, this is impossible. All bullets start to drop as soon as they leave the barrel. If you go to the bottom of the ad and read the really fine print, it says if the rifle is zeroed at 400 yards the bullet could still be in the kill

zone at 450 yards. That is not quite the same as "flat-out to 450 yards." However, this type of over exaggerated advertising must be effective because Nosler has now introduced their 30 and 33 Nosler. I'm not saying these are not good cartridges but check the ballistics. They are no better than existing offers from Weatherby, Remington and Winchester.

The second item of discussion is the total hype surrounding the 6.5 Creedmore cartridge. It is nothing new, only the name has changed. I guess the attraction is in the fact that the 6.5 Creedmore is a short, fat cartridge that can be chambered in the A. R. style semi-auto rifles. It is being touted as a long range cartridge. The 6.5 Creedmore with a 143 grain bullet only has a muzzle velocity of 2700 FPS and drops over 26 feet at 1000 yards. To me this is not a great long range cartridge. The only ones I have seen were chambered in bolt action long barrel rifles. Again, I'm not saying this is not an effective cartridge but we have had 6.5 millimeter military and civilian offerings for many years. For example the 6.5x55, .264 Winchester mag. and .260 Remington to name a few. I understand the marketing strategy is to sell more merchandise but don't be fooled by the somewhat questionable advertising. We certainly have made significant improvements in powder and bullet quality for hunting and target shooting but there is nothing new in cartridge size and shape. Between Parker Ackley, Roy Weatherby and numerous other wildcatters it's probably been done.

I am also extremely disappointed with these companies for glorifying and seemingly promoting long range hunting. Long range target shooting is fun but long range

hunting is morally wrong and unethical in my opinion. It may give someone occasional bragging rights but much more often it results in wounded animals and wasted game.

Lead Shot vs. Non-Toxic Shot

by Johnny Kirby

Now it seems the discussion on the effectiveness of Non-Toxic shot on game birds is carrying over to Dove Hunting. Non-Toxic shot has been required for ducks and geese for several years. The rules not only apply to coastal areas but also to lakes and rivers where aquatic birds are known to frequent. The main argument since the law became into affect is that the non-toxic shot that was available at first did a lousy job of killing birds. Newer development in material for non-toxic loads is starting to show good signs. The reason for non-toxic materials that birds feed on small grain and seeds and will pick up the shot thinking its food. Just a few lead pellets can eventually kill the bird. Now our Texas Parks and Wildlife folk are considering applying this rule to dove hunting, they did a program in three Central Texas Counties with a group of dove hunters to try to determine if there was any significant difference in effectiveness of lead vs non-toxic shot. Their conclusion was "No significant Difference". The Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. spent \$500,000 on this study to tell us what we already knew. You can kill doves with non-toxic shot. I am personally all in favor of non-toxic shot and anything else we can do to protect our game resources. I don't really care if I need to spend another dollar a box for non-toxic shot. According to the studies the average dove hunter will shoot six shells for every bird he kills, that's four bids per box of shells.



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