

Fall hunting season is upon us

By Hal Spain

No discussion of the upcoming hunting season would be complete without a discourse concerning the annual rainfall to date and summer temperature ranges. When I looked back on my rainfall records, I was shocked to find that we have had over 24 inches of rainfall through the first three quarters of the year. That would normally send the message that all was good for the upcoming hunting season. As one might guess, the total rainfall for the first three quarters of the year does not give us an accurate depiction of our prospects for the upcoming season.

Following a wonderful winter season of rainfall (9.04 inches during the 1st quarter), the wet stuff just quit for the next five months, with totals of .41; 1.50; 2.11, 1.05, and .11 for the months of April through August, respectively. That, combined with high temperatures during the summer, cast a lot of doubt on whether quail and turkey numbers could respond from last year's low counts. Although we did receive 10.06 inches in September, 9 inches of that came in three days during the middle of September.

What does that mean to our wildlife situation? We should have plenty of adult turkeys for

the upcoming season, although I don't know how many young turkey poults made it through the hot summer. As for quail, our outlook is about the same as last year, which was poor. Helicopter and roadside covey counts have not been encouraging, as most Rolling Plains and Concho Valley counties are anticipating a 2-4 rating for this year's crop on a 10 point system, with 10 being the highest rating.

Winter wheat grazing which is always a staple for our deer herd is non-existent this year so far, as it has been too dry for farmers to think about getting any wheat up just yet. The September rains came so late that most farmers are postponing drilling wheat seed until the fall armyworm season is over. If we get some rain pretty soon, we might have some wheat grazing toward the latter part of the season, maybe. One bit of good news is that temperatures have begun cooling off recently; so we might get a rut going before too late in this year's deer season. Also on the bright side, Parks and Wildlife is predicting a pretty good deer hunting year, especially considering the dry growing season.

As to seasons, we are at the tail end of a dove season that has not produced many dove at all for the freezer. Parks and Wildlife was predicting a banner

dove season, while in reality it has been pretty much a bust throughout our area and across the Rolling Plains, where hunters usually have some really good early hunts. In our dove hunting zone in Coke County (Central Zone), the regular season will end November 1, 2020, with the late winter season set for December 18, 2020 through January 14, 2021. 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 6, 2020, with no antlerless permit required except on MLD properties. The early youth season for deer and turkey will run from Oct. 31, 2020 through Nov. 1, 2020. The general deer and turkey season will run from November 7, 2020 through January 3, 2021. The special late general season will run from January 4 - 17, 2021, for

antlerless and spike bucks only. The bag limit for deer is 5, with no more than 2 bucks, all seasons combined.

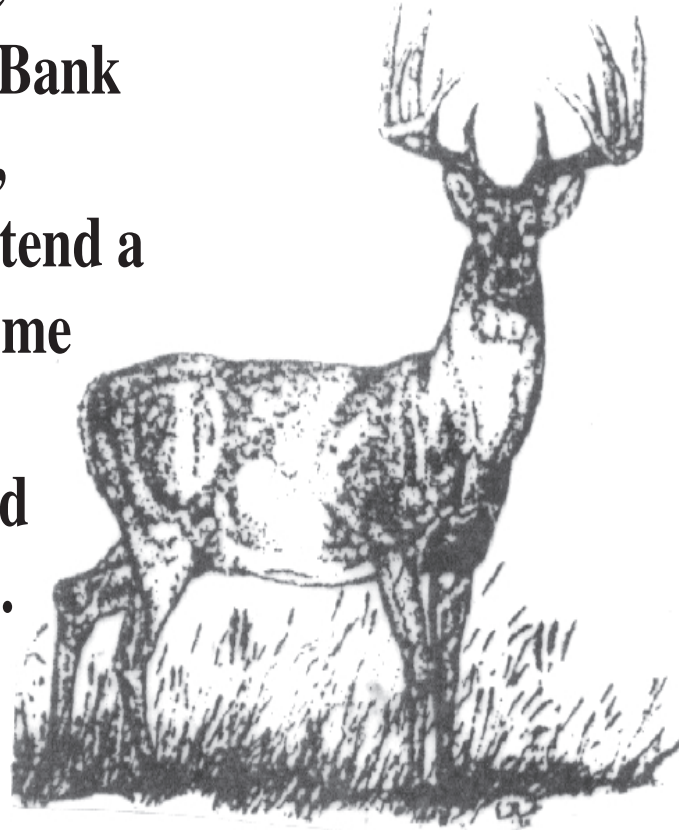
Turkey season will run concurrently with deer season, November 7, 2020 through January 3, 2021. Spring turkey season has been set for April 3 through May 16, 2021, gobblers or bearded hens only, with a bag limit of 4 (all seasons combined). A special youth only season for spring gobblers will be March 27

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