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May 2008

### **President's Message** (Allen Smith, ADHA President)

I want to welcome all of the new members that have joined ADHA since our last newsletter. I also want to thank each of those that renewed their memberships. I hope you've taken the time to register on our discussion board and participate in the many different on-going discussions there. If you haven't, I encourage you to do so. Our newsletters and discussion board are our primary methods of communication, and we want every member to be involved. We encourage you to voice your thoughts and opinions, and take an active role in helping us.

This year, we're all seeing the effects of a slow-down in the economy along with rising costs for groceries and record prices in gasoline. As we try to trim our budgets at home, we're faced with doing the same thing in our organization. We've been active, but much less active than a year ago. As you can imagine, everything we do requires money. Since our budget is tight, we're trying to accomplish as much as we can on a shoe-string budget. However, we're still committed to doing all we

can do with our available funds. I hope you'll recognize our efforts in spite of us doing less than before.

So far this year we've been involved in a good number of things. We had the ADHA booth set up at the Big Buck Classic in Little Rock, the Arkansas Sportshow in Jonesboro, a Gander Mountain Tent Sale in North Little Rock, and at the Hunting/Fishing Expo & Wild Game Dinner at the Christian Ministries Church in Hot Springs. On February 23rd, Region 1 hosted a regional dinner that was held at the Western Sizzlin Steakhouse in Batesville. We had about a dozen people show up and had a great time. We also held a Region 4 dinner at the Western Sizzlin Steakhouse in Jacksonville on April 26. ADHA dinners are an excellent way of meeting fellow ADHA members and talking about deer hunting. Early this year, many of our ADHA members received Hunter Education Instructor Certifications in order to teach Hunter Safety to our youth and to help them get their Hunter Education card. On May 31, 2008, ADHA will conduct a 3D bow shoot fund raiser and

membership drive at Bucksnot Hollar Archery Range near Shirley. On June 7, 2008, ADHA will assist with the Arkansas Youth Shooting Sports State Tournament at the Remington Gun Club, Lonoke. We'll have our booth at the Buffalo River Elk Festival in Jasper once again where we'll conduct the ADHA Elk Hunt drawing and announce this year's winner, which takes place on June 27th & 28th. The ADHA Annual Meeting will be conducted on August 2nd. At this meeting we conduct our business and install new Officers and Directors. Although a location hasn't been determined, it will likely be held at Gander Mountain in North Little Rock. Anyone interested in attending or helping with upcoming events should contact their Regional Director, Assistant Director, or visit the ADHA discussion board.

As you can see, we've been busy. We've trimmed our efforts compared to last year, but we continue to be very active. In order to achieve all we'd like to do, we need your

(See "President" page 2)

# ADHA AT CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES OUTDOOR EXPO

(Ronnie Shelton, Region 3 Assistant Director)

Sunday, April 23rd, Christian Ministries Church held a hunting and fishing expo at their church. The church is located north of Hot Springs off Arkansas Highway 7. The ADHA was offered a spot with the vendors at this event and my wife, daughter and I set up a booth for the ADHA. We were given a table and a spot to hang our banners. I had some deer antlers on the table and since we were under a tent out in the rain I used the antlers to hold down our pamphlets from the wind.

The event ran from 3:00pm till 6:00 pm with a wild game supper served at 6:00. This was the first time for them to hold this event and they had over 200 folks show up. There were all kinds of events such as drawings for prizes, a bow shoot, turkey calling contest and fishing demonstrations.

I handed out pamphlets and told folks about the ADHA and most of them had never heard of our organization. I had a laptop set up with a slideshow CD showing past events and projects of the ADHA.

After we shut down the booth and loaded up we went in the church for the wild game dinner. These folks really know how to put on a feed. There was wild game of every kind such as bear, wild hog, wild turkey, deer and catfish. This was the first time that I had eaten bear. I really liked the bear burrito casserole. I even took home a plate there was so much left over.

I would like to thank Christian Ministries Church for the opportunity to represent the ADHA at their event. We have already been invited back next year and I said I would be there.

I would also like to thank Kent Holmes for making the slideshow CD and getting it to me; Allen Smith for getting the banners and pamphlets to me; Lee Lane for sending me an ADHA shirt and hat to donate as door prizes and Marty Mitchell for being set up beside me so I wouldn't feel so alone.

## SEE YOU THERE NEXT YEAR

“President” (continued from page 1)

help. We need every member to consider volunteering for at least one event. Please contact your ADHA Regional Director and let him know you're interested in helping.

## Another “Microstamping” Bill Goes Down!

Connecticut legislation that would have forced manufacturers to adopt flawed, patented, sole-sourced technologies to “microstamp” the firing pins on firearms so they'd imprint a unique serial number on every primer failed to pass out of the Judiciary Committee. The committee's failure to pass the bills followed testimony from senior executives from several of America's leading firearm and ammunition manufactures.

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# **Doe Management Equals Deer Management**

by Kevin Holsonback

What does "doe management" mean? Among most wildlife professionals, doe management is synonymous with antlerless deer harvest. Antlerless harvest should be one of the most important components of a deer management plan. While most hunters and clubs realize the importance of managing bucks on their property, many fail to realize the importance of managing antlerless deer as well. Many things can be accomplished with an adequate antlerless harvest, all of which ultimately affect the buck population. A balanced sex ratio, shorter and earlier breeding season, increased reproduction and recruitment, and improved herd health are a few of the objectives that can be met with proper antlerless harvest.

Wildlife biologists often encounter concerns about antlerless harvest recommendations when assisting private landowners and hunting clubs with developing deer management plans. Hunters and landowners are often reluctant to harvest does because they are afraid they do not have enough deer. This misconception can often be dissuaded with sound information concerning general deer biology and the affects of antlerless harvest.

One population characteristic that is greatly affected by antlerless harvest is the adult sex ratio. Why is a balanced sex ratio important? If there are a disproportionate number of does in a deer herd, it is reasonable to assume all will not be bred in a timely manner. Many does will not breed and conceive on their first estrous cycle because there are not enough adult bucks in the population. These does may not be bred until their second, third or later estrus. The result is a long protracted breeding season. Also, these does will give birth later in the year than does that conceived during their first estrous cycle. These late summer, early fall born fawns typically encounter vegetation that is generally poorer in quality and quantity as it "hardens off" for winter. This causes most late born fawns to come out of their first winter in poorer condition than early born fawns. In addition, many late born bucks will have poorer antler development as 1 ½; year olds than fawns born earlier in the year. With an extremely unbalanced sex ratio, some does may not breed at all.

Too many does also means the bucks will have to do very little searching for breeding opportunities, reducing a hunter's chance of seeing a buck. When the number of does greatly exceeds the number of bucks, the bucks do not have to compete for the right to breed. This reduces the number of rubs and scrapes observed during the hunting season. Prolonged breeding seasons wear bucks down more than a shorter, more intense rut. Bucks in this

situation enter late winter and early spring in much poorer physical condition. These bucks face a much tougher recovery period in the spring and summer, which can affect antler development and body weights the following year.

A given habitat can only support a certain number of deer in healthy condition. If the number of deer exceeds this level, habitat degradation and poorer herd health result. About one-third of a deer herd should be removed each year to maintain the population at a stable level. If the sex ratio is balanced, doe harvest should make up between 40 and 60 percent of the overall harvest to maintain this healthy balance. After only a few years of aggressive antlerless harvest, doe sightings may decline. Many hunters fear the decreased sightings are a result of drastically reduced deer numbers, when in fact; they have only educated the surviving does with the increased hunting pressure.

Fawn production and recruitment typically increase as a result of doe management. Does usually begin breeding at 1 ½ years of age, and if healthy, will reproduce each year until they die. Fifty does in good condition produce more fawns than 100 unhealthy does. Additionally, fawns produced by healthy does tend to have higher survival rates than fawns born to does in poor condition.

When deciding to harvest does, hunters must be careful to avoid harvesting buck fawns or "button" bucks. This can easily be accomplished with just a little practice at identification. Hunters can learn to tell the difference between adult does and fawns by observing body shape and size. By waiting until several deer are present, a size comparison of the deer can be made. Additionally, adult does typically have longer and larger faces than fawns. The shape of the head on most buck fawns is flatter than a doe's head and the developing pedicels or "buttons" are often visible upon close observation. Behavioral cues may help distinguish age classes of antlerless deer; fawns are usually more playful than adults and are generally not as cautious. Plus, fawns are often the first deer to arrive at a feeding area.

Managing antlerless deer harvest is just as important as managing buck harvest. As a matter of fact, a good deer management plan will always place equal importance on managing bucks and does. Often, in their attempt to meet harvest goals, hunters may forget that hunting does that have been pressured can be just as difficult as trying to harvest a mature buck. Don't overlook this opportunity to enjoy a challenging and exciting hunt when trying to improve your deer herd.

## **EHD on Crowley's Ridge** (Jeff Vaughn, Region 2 Director)

I was talking to a friend in Harrisburg and he said they have seen some dead deer that they thought had EHD, he said he also seen some that were killed that had the "elf hoof" where the hoof turns up at the point and actually grows backwards, he was told this is a result of EHD. I don't know anything about it, I just know they have seen about 15 dead ones on the ridge this fall, and he said he heard reports of 30 or so towards Wynne? Anyone else seen anything, like the hooves or flaking of the hoofs?

Here is an article I found about EHD.

2002 a Record Year for Hemorrhagic Disease As reports trickle in from across the U.S., it becomes clear that chronic wasting disease wasn't the only major whitetail health issue of 2002. Bluetongue and epizootic hemorrhagic disease killed thousands of deer.

Although chronic wasting disease dominated the discussion of wildlife health issues in 2002, several viral diseases actually killed far more whitetails. And, the damage was widespread, with researches for the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study finding one or the other of the virus strains in whitetail tissue samples from Georgia north to Pennsylvania and as far west as Texas, Kansas and Wisconsin.

The culprits were well known to deer researchers: epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) and bluetongue (BT). These similar diseases cause high fever and are frequently fatal; infected deer often are found near water sources, where they apparently go in an effort to cool off. BT looks to be confined to the Southeast, while EHD is more widespread.

Both EHD and BT are known to be spread by *Culicoides sonorensis*, a species of biting midge. Due to the life cycle of these insects, most outbreaks of the two diseases occur in late summer into autumn, and that appears to have been the case in 2002. The year's earliest virus isolation, from a white-tail in Virginia, came on Aug. 14; the last isolation came from Kansas on Nov. 5. In both of those cases, and in the vast majority of others, the EHDV-2 strain of virus was implicated.

Outbreaks historically have been seen every decade or so in many locations, especially in the eastern half of the U.S. What makes last year's massive 2002 outbreak interesting is that prior to 2002, the most recent major occurrence took place only three years earlier.

### **RESEARCHING DEER DISEASES**

Much of the study of diseases affecting whitetails and other wildlife is done by the SCWDS, which is part of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia. Dr. David Stallknecht heads up research of hemorrhagic diseases.

Drought aids in the life cycle of the *Culicoides sonorensis* midge, and dry conditions likely were a factor in both of these most recent outbreaks. However, researchers note that much more study needs to be done to understand all of the variables that control the timing and severity of HD outbreaks.

In the event you find dead deer on your hunting land (particularly during late summer or fall), contact your state wildlife agency. Although the various hemorrhagic diseases seen in whitetails are in some ways similar to Africa's virulent Ebola virus, they do not affect humans.

### **CLINICAL SIGNS**

Clinical signs of EHD and bluetongue are very similar.

White-tailed deer develop signs of illness about 7 days after exposure. A constant characteristic of the disease is its sudden onset. Deer initially lose their appetite and fear of man, grow progressively weaker, often salivate excessively, develop a rapid pulse and respiration rate, and finally become unconscious. Hemorrhage and lack of oxygen in the blood results in a blue appearance of the oral mucosa, hence the name 'bluetongue'. Eight to 36 hours following the onset of observable signs, deer pass into a shock-like state, become prostrate and die.

## **Which Doe Do I Shoot** (Lee Lane, ADHA Treasurer)

During the late winter I get the chance to do some observations of my local deer herd. Its fun to see family groups intermingle together usually during the most stressful time period of their lives such as late season. With the Ozarks being so low in good food late season, with exception of the last two years where we had really good mast crops late season. But its fun to watch the different age groups of these deer interact. You can tell they surely have a hirarchy within their structure. I sometimes wish I knew which alpha doe had which siblings to see how she reacts to them. I can only assume which ones are hers and her grandchildren. But I have witnessed young bucks come into these late winter feeding areas and a alpha doe raise up on them and hoove them away. I have seen groups of 10-15 come in at once and lone does come in behind them real weary. Its like she is out of her doe group and she is trying

to fit in, but knows her place.

But to get to my question, which doe do you think is best for taking out of the herd for management reasons? Is the alpha doe best or maybe a young 1 1/2 doe?

I look at this as a survival issue within the herd itself. An alpha doe is surely the best leader to guide her group around. She is the most weary of the bunch. She will sit back and scan the area before entering any known areas of humans, while the young yearling will gleefully jump right out on the food. Alpha does surely have adapted to stand hunters as well. I can't count the times I have had one peg me sitting dead still, with only my eyes moving to watch the action around the group. She will stomp the ground, check the wind,

(See "Doe" on page 5)

# ADHA Elk Hunt

The 2008 ADHA Elk Hunt drawing will be conducted at the 11th Annual Jasper Elk Festival in June 2008. All new members and renewing members will receive one chance in the drawing with the exception of those

"Doe" (continued from page 4)

move around and check the wind again. Always trying to detect danger for her group.

Another thing that amazes me is how she hooks back up with her doe yearlings after a week of breeding. She protects them just like any other mother would.

So which doe would you kill? Is the alpha mature doe the best target? Or the 1 1/2 to 3 1/2? I would think a certain amount of mature does do need to be killed, but I don't think you need to take out a majority of them. We try to balance them on our hunting land as best we can I would assume.

If you don't get to see these groups intermingled, you really won't know which one is alpha. So I guess any doe is better than no doe in my book.

COMMENT by Del Ramsey (ADHA Charter member)

I've often watched those belligerent old does that don't seem to get along with any other deer.

I've chosen to target some of these old does simply because I got tired of watching them beat up or attempt to chase off any other deer that got close to them!

Generally speaking if I determine that a few does should be harvested we target doe fawns. I target them because Mother Nature and I have the least investment in them and they are fine eating. One has to be very careful shooting doe fawns. "THINKING" you are drawing or sighting on a doe fawn and not a buck fawn does not cut it for me. You have to KNOW what you are shooting.

COMMENT by Brian Smith (ADHA member)

I noticed over the years in watching these does interact with each other that they act much like my horses. There is a dominate doe, she is usually older but not necessarily the oldest. Personality of the animal determines its role in the herd much as our does in our lives. She is going to eat first and breed first. I have seen them bully their way around the feeder and I have seen them fight younger does away from a buck. I have heard people say the old doe is watching out for the herd, but I guess I see it differently. She walks into a field last for a reason. She's sending the young ones out to see if they have trouble, if not then she'll come on out and take over the best spot. I think the best thing you can do for herd

that are serving on the Board of Directors. Charter members receive 12 chances and those current members that refer new members will receive one chance each.

health is kill the alpha doe. The younger does will eat better, and breed without the harassment of the old doe. A yearling deer is better to eat, but you really get so much more meat out of a mature doe. Anyways this is my two cents.

COMMENT by John Mashburn (ADHA Charter member)

But I have noticed a couple of older does on our place/places that I know have not bred in a year or more so I have targeted them for early season removal. But, late season I usually wait until a few are in sight to see/compare so I don't shoot that little buck.

COMMENT by Darrell Speakes (ADHA Region 1 Director)

Thursday morning, I shot the biggest of 6 that came up. Meat in the freezer now.

## **Forget Dog Bites!** (from American Hunter)

The manager of the Hilldale, WI post office has a problem! A flock of gobblers is harassing postal workers in Parkwood Hills, a neighborhood located near Owen Conservation Park. One of the birds even flew into the open door of a mail truck and spurred the driver, reported the Wisconsin State Journal. Other toms have been seen chasing blue-clad USPS workers down otherwise serene streets, which caused Eric Lobner, regional wildlife program supervisor for the WI Dept of Natural Resources, to say this tough bunch of toms has a rap sheet. Witness say the toms chased school kids into the local elementary school. It seems this un-hunted group of gobblers has lost its fear of people. Add in an increase in testosterone with the turkey's spring breeding season, and you have some tough-guy toms. Postmen have even tried water guns to keep the gobblers at bay but the toms have gotten used to the water, so maybe the USPS should call on some American hunters to hunt this notorious gang!

**The Arkansas Game & Fish Commission's Deer Management Plan Revision - Goals and Objectives is posted on the web at:**

**[http://www.agfc.com/hunting/deer/deerplan\\_revision/public\\_scoping.aspx](http://www.agfc.com/hunting/deer/deerplan_revision/public_scoping.aspx)**

## **Is Late Rutting Activity an Indicator of Problems? (By: Kip Adams)**

I have been asked many times about rutting activity during December and January and whether this signaled a problem for a management program.

Rubs, scrapes and chasing behavior during December and January are common sights to deer hunters and managers in the South. Deer in southern latitudes are afforded the luxury of breeding during several months, even though this can still be a sign of poor health, poor habitat or skewed sex ratios and can be improved by better deer management. I have seen newborn fawns in central Florida as early as March and as late as November. These fawns would have been conceived in August and April, respectively. This demonstrates that does breed during at least 9 months of the year in Florida, and this window is around five months in most other areas of the South. This phenomenon has been well documented in the scientific literature and in *Quality Whitetails* (see the October 2005 issue, page 14).

Deer in northern latitudes are not afforded the luxury of breeding over that range of months. Weather and vegetation growth cycles dictate that the majority of deer breed over a relatively short time period. A tight breeding window ensures an equally tight fawning period corresponding with the peak of native-vegetation quality after spring green-up. This timing is critical as fawns arriving at green-up receive nutritional advantages over fawns arriving early or late. This phenomenon increases in importance as you move north and is also well documented in the scientific literature.

December and January rutting activity in the South is common. This activity in the North may be a red flag depending on who is doing the breeding. The majority of deer in northern latitudes breed during a 2- to 3-week window in November. Conception data from Pennsylvania, however, shows deer breed over at least a 100-day period. Most of these deer breed during November, but a few breed as early as September and as late as February. These early and late breeders are at a distinct ecological disadvantage. Does that are not bred during their first estrous cycle will cycle again in about 28 days. Therefore, if a doe isn't bred during November, she will recycle in December and again in January if necessary. Does that breed late will have fawns that are born late, and late fawns begin their life disadvantaged. In these cases, December and January breeding signals poor management.

Quality Deer Management programs can help increase the number of females that are bred during the optimal breeding period by balancing the adult sex ratio and increasing the number of mature bucks in the population. Poorly managed herds often have skewed sex ratios favoring does and contain more deer than the habitat can adequately support. This number of deer can be high or it can be low if the habitat is poor. For example, 15 deer per square mile may not sound like many deer if you are used to having high densities, but it

is too many if the habitat can only support five to 10 deer per square mile.

Even well-managed northern herds can show signs of December and January breeding. I'll define well-managed as having the proper number of deer for the habitat, a balanced adult sex ratio (less than two does per buck) and bucks in multiple age classes (25 percent or more of the bucks are 3 1/2 or older). Because these herds are in balance with the habitat, the deer typically receive enough nutrition to express their body, antler and reproductive potential. Late breeding in these herds is more common following autumns with abundant mast and/or agricultural crops and during winters that begin with mild weather.

The culprits are often 7- to 8-month-old doe fawns. Fawns can become sexually mature in their first fall and can breed if they reach a certain body size, approximately 80 to 90 pounds for northern deer and about 70 pounds for whitetails in the South. Fawns that receive abundant forage can reach this threshold weight, but they often reach it after the primary breeding period. These breeders come into estrus in December, January and even February, and are often the reason for late-season rutting activity.

The percentage of fawns that breed is an important piece of data for managers to collect. It is not uncommon in areas with poor habitat, overabundant herds and/or extreme winter conditions to have less than 5 percent of doe fawns breeding. Conversely, it is not uncommon in areas with good soils, abundant forage, balanced deer herds and/or mild winters to have 50 percent of the doe fawns breeding.

So how do you know if late-season breeding is being conducted primarily by adults or fawns? The answer lies in your harvest data. Are your doe weights above average for your respective region? What percentage of your adult does are lactating? Are any of your yearling does lactating? If yearlings are lactating, that means they were bred as fawns. This is why it is so important to pull a jawbone and collect data from every deer harvested or found dead on the property. The percentage of yearling and 2 1/2-year-old does lactating provides much insight into the cause of late-season breeding activity.

If your adult does have low body weights and low lactation rates for your area, then late-season breeding activity may be a sign your management program needs help. Other cues are likely also present, such as a skewed adult sex ratio, poor fawn-to-doe ratio and predominantly young buck age structure. If your adult does have good body weights and high lactation rates, then at least some and probably most of the late-season breeding activity involves fawns. Again, other cues will likely be present such as a balanced adult sex ratio, high fawn-to-doe ratio and a higher percentage of older bucks in the population.

(See "Rutting" on back page)

## **West Virginia Deer Test Positive for CWD**

Five deer have tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease in West Virginia. These 5 deer have now brought the total for the state to 19 total deer testing positive for CWD.

The deer were killed by hunters and then tested as part of West Virginia's CWD surveillance effort. Tests were performed on 1,285 hunter-harvested deer that were brought to game checking stations in Hampshire County. One of the five deer was located outside of the "containment area" but still within Hampshire County.

CWD has now been detected in a total of 19 deer in Hampshire County with the first case being detected in 2005.

According to the State they are operating within guidelines established by its CWD – Incident Response Plan, the DNR has taken the steps necessary to implement appropriate management actions designed to control the spread of this disease, prevent further introduction of the disease, and possibly eliminate the disease from the state. That is a pretty bold statement considering containment and elimination have not occurred in West Virginia OR anywhere else for that matter.

With our current knowledge of the disease there is no current control method that has been found to effectively control the spread of CWD.

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**"Uniting all Arkansas Deer Hunters"**

**"Rutting"** (from page 6) Every rule has exceptions, though, and areas with large amounts of agriculture typically have higher percentages of fawns breeding.

Abundant food can mask some management shortfalls. The increased quantity and quality of nutrition from agricultural crops can put deer on a higher nutritional plane and allow a higher percentage of doe fawns to breed.

So, is late-season rutting sign good or bad? If you are in the South it may be a sign that deer physical condition is poor or adult sex ratios are highly skewed toward does, but if you are in the North it is definitely a critical piece of information. Look at your harvest data and the health of the habitat. North or South, they will let you know whether your management program is progressing or is in need of help.

**The Armed American Hunter**

(From NRA's American Hunter)

Last March, 10 year-old Paul Schalow and his family took a trip to Arizona's Tonto National Forest to celebrate his birthday. When they stopped for lunch, a mountain lion approached Paul and his cousin, Brittany. As his mother screamed to stay still, the cougar bit and clawed Paul, but before it was able to do real damage, Paul's grandfather, Newton Smith, retrieved a handgun and shot the cougar, which stumbled a few feet away and died. Paul later told "Today Show" host Matt Lauer, he couldn't wait to go into Arizona's wild areas again.

**Has Your Membership Expired Or Will it Soon Expire?**

**Please check the mailing label above for your expiration date (just after your name)! Make any necessary changes below and return this page to ADHA, PO Box 2175, Jonesboro, AR 72402, along with your \$15.00 renewal fee.**

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