

# TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S NEWS

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The Newsletter of The Texas Sportsman's Association

"Dedicated to educating the public about the need for protection, conservation and improvement of fish, game and other wildlife, grasslands, and forests and to safeguard the freedoms that enable these pursuits."



**TERREL MAERTZ**, former Texas Sportsman's Association treasurer, presents a check to Lester Lamberth for a lifetime hunting and fishing license. The presentation was made during the TSA's Annual Business Meeting March 2 at Mentz.

## Average buck sires 2.17 offspring in his lifetime

By **HERMAN W. BRUNE**

The bombshell that Dr. Randy DeYoung, research scientist at Texas A&M University in Kingsville, dropped was that the average buck contributes only 2.17 offspring to the general deer population during its lifetime. Then he went on to explain the findings of his data collection and conclusions that began with his PHD studies at Mississippi State.

"It's not a handful of the biggest and dominant bucks that

are siring all the fawns," says Young. "There's a lot more bucks breeding does than we'd previously thought, including the younger bucks. Then with all the does with twins, as much as 25 percent of those twins are sired by two different bucks."

Young indicated that the greatest hurdle is to collect enough DNA samples from a particular deer population to be able trace bloodlines.

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## Feral Hog Symposium July 11 at Cat Spring

There are nearly 2 million feral hogs in Texas, the largest feral hog population in the United States. Their numbers are continuing to increase due to their high reproductive potential and the lack of natural predators.

Many landowners throughout Texas have experienced problems with feral hogs for years. The term feral is generally used to describe something that was once domesticated and is now wild. Our current feral hogs are most likely decedents of domesticated swineherds that were allowed to roam free and graze. Without man's intervention and controlled breeding, feral hogs have been able to adapt to their environments multiplying rapidly. This has led to our current situation of feral hog rooting up hay meadows and destroying property. Landowners have tried various methods of control. Everything from hunting, shooting, trapping and even exclusion, but nothing seems to make a dent in their population.



If you are interested in learning more about control of feral hogs, then plan to attend a Feral Hog Symposium on July 11, 2008 at the Cat Spring Ag Society Hall in Cat Spring. Specialists with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Wildlife Services and Wildlife Biologists will be speaking on feral hog biology, the best methods for controlling feral hogs, the feral hog abatement project and special considerations to utilize in dealing with feral hogs on your property.

Meeting registration is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. and the program will follow at 1:30 to 6:30 p.m. A meal will be provided after the presentation.

Five CEUs will be given to pesticide applicators. A \$20.00 registration fee will be charged at the door, which will include your meal, refreshments and handout materials for the meeting. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Austin County at 979-865-5911, ext. 249.

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**Visit TSA On Line!**

The TSA web site is up and running, and members are encouraged to visit:

<http://www.texassportsmansassociation.org>

The website is maintained by TSA Director Leslie Heinsohn.

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# Analyzing 'the rut' — part science and part common sense

By **HERMAN W. BRUNE**

**The guide's observation:**

Jason McMillan glanced to his left and quit breathing. He stiffened and sat staring. Then he muttered an almost inaudible, "Don't Move!" to his guide.

That was easy enough. My binoculars were focused straight ahead and my attention centered on a group of three- and four-year old whitetail bucks. Jason was looking past me and I smiled at the notion that most folks move when you tell them — "don't move!"

The deer he studied walked into my peripheral vision and my breathing stopped. Nervous energy crackled within our makeshift blind. The jump in karma from quiet reverence to sudden fever should have sent every wild critter in the countryside to their holes. Instead, the new buck sauntered to a stunted mesquite 40 yards away, raked his antlers in the limbs, chewed the smaller branches and pawed the ground. It was obviously the king stud buzzard in this neck of the woods. The only thing this 'ol boy needed was some cheap sunglasses and a Marlboro. We perched on our stools and waited. Then finally, it marched towards the other bucks and began driving them away from the does.

"What do you think?" Jason whispered his query.

"That's a helluva buck," I wheezed. "It's a straight 11-pointer with a kicker on his left G2. He's got good mass, good width, he's black-horned, big-bodied, and ... his tine length is only average and that may hurt his score. The problem is figuring the age. His head is blunt, his eyes are saggy, and he's roman-nosed like an old buck. He's fat and has a belly showing ... But, his underline is a little too tight and there isn't a real sway in its back, his back is pretty straight! He's sort of deep through the brisket and the glands on his hocks are colored up. But I can't be certain that this is a 5-1/2-year-old shooter. His general confirmation says he's 4-1/2 years old, but dadgum this booger is right on that hard-to-tell line!"

The date was December 13, and we were hunting a 30,000-acre open range ranch where the guides' jobs consisted of judging deer ages, grading antler scores, gutting, caping, psychiatric therapy for hunters, and, supplying this professional service with only the elixir of John Barleycorn as medicinal aid. So, the first call of business was to make sure nobody blasts a trophy buck unless the beast is at least 5-1/2 years old. Then it's our responsibility to guarantee a reasonable guess at the Boone & Crockett score.

There were also new ideas interjecting burrs of reality that could disrupt our standard management procedures and the way we think about the rut. These ideas weren't new to

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**MIKE MCMURRAY**, (top photo) was the guest speaker at the TSA's Fall Fundraiser on March 2, talking about native grasses. Doris Rinn, past TSA president (bottom photo) introduced the speaker.



**LIFETIME MEMBERS** of the Texas Sportsman's Association were recognized at the March 2 Annual Business Meeting held in Mentz. They are, front row, Jessie Kokemor (left) and Doris Rinn; and back row, from left, R.H. Priesmeyer, Gary Schertz, L.J. Rinn, Kirby Klump, John Walla and Paul Hattermann.

## Haven't joined yet? TSA welcomes new members

The Texas Sportsman's Association welcomes new memberships. Dues are only \$5 per year, and memberships run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year except for lifetime memberships. All TSA memberships expire on Dec. 31 each year.

Simply cut out the application form on this page, enclose the fee, address an envelope to TSA, P.O. Box 26, Columbus, TX 78934, stamp it and put it in the mail! You may also sign up online at <http://www.texasportsmansassociation.org>.

NAME _____		COUNTY _____
last	first	
(PLEASE PRINT)		<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Address Change
ADDRESS _____		EXP. DATE _____
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____
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I AGREE TO SUPPORT THE GOALS OF TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION		
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Texas Sportsman's Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



DUES: Annual	\$ 5.00
Life (Onetime)	\$200.00
DONATION TO:	
TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSN.	\$ _____
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:	\$ _____
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# Looking Down from the Saddle By HERMAN W. BRUNE

Howard, the resident jackass was missing. Maybe the errant ass was in another pasture or maybe somebody had borrowed the lop-eared critter but loose observation during the short tour around the Brune Ranch noted that Howard was not in attendance.

It's a plaguing dilemma when you consider that your friends may have borrowed your donkey. But it is a common practice apt to happen whenever drinking



and politics interrupt a sane day. The stubborn but pleasant beast of burden known for its timely braying, participation in gold prospecting partnerships, and often depicted wearing sombreros and serapes is transitioned into a toothy, grinning caricature that draws

woeful groans from the foundations of democracy. Yes, donkey-borrowing on an election year may be expected. The asinine needs of a donkey-borrower must be quenched. Howard wasn't actually a "he," and Howard didn't actually belong to me. In truth the animal's God-given name is questionable. The ugly third cousin to a mustang belonged to Howard Henson a native of Weimar, Texas. Howard called his gray line-backed steed Pecos, or Peso, or Paco, or Taco, or some such lame moniker. Meanwhile, my other as-tute compadres and I are infinitely more sensitive to ethnicities and genders. We disapprove of calling your duck hunting dog Thibodeaux, or the catfish in your aquarium Lewinski. You shouldn't relate to your mother-in-law's senile housecat as Pelosi, or the hamster that lives in the dark under the couch as Colmes. So in our own flash of PC wisdom, we called the donkey Howard.

Howard came to live with me when his/its owner, Howard, decided to sell out and rent in town. His wife, Judy, had convinced him that living 20 miles back in the brush wasn't a place to raise a modern-day family. His ass was about to move. Howard needed a place to live, so, the Brune Ranch unrolled the red carpet.

## 'Le manquant donkey'

But now Howard wasn't in sight. It was probably my fault. During my absence while guiding hunters in Wyoming for two months and then in Mexico for another two months, the livestock at the homestead tended to step over the fence and checkout the neighbor's grass. Inspection of all the trails, openings, and meadows headed to the river bottom yielded no Howard. Miraculously, the rest of the horses seemed to be accounted for, up on all fours, and making a good living. And the local hunters hadn't made a dent in the deer population. There were deer everywhere watching me search for Howard. However, I was also seeing the place for the first time in months and was looking for more than an invisible donkey.

It was time to rely on my ranch manager, Phil Clark. Oilfield welder by day and dancing lothario when the lights get dim, Phil keeps track of everything around my place that shakes its tail. And it seemed that a phrase he'd muttered kept echoing in the back of my mind, something about having a special purpose for Howard after hunting season. So I gave him a call.

"Hey Phil, what are y'all doing?"

"We're out here at Hoelscher's stuffing sausage and we need some help. Hoelscher says he's doing some experimenting and he wants you to help with the seasoning. We're going to make a couple of different batches of dried sausage and Hoelscher says you can put as much pepper in one batch as you want. So, come on out and bring some beer!"

What a grand welcome home. Hoelscher's smokehouse is one of the best backwoods haunts left over from our earlier years. It's one of the few places where old buddies can reminisce about the enjoyed sins of youth, stand in the dusky realms, and feel the nearness of those sins. We can discuss the old timers with their hoop nets, .22s, and spotlights. We talk about the way practices and ideas have changed and we drink Old Crow,

Budweiser, chew tobacco and cigars, and spit on the floor. The younger generation comes in for awhile but they don't stay long. Our talk is too rough and our knives are working too fast. The boys that couldn't buy an "A" in high school know how to butcher meat, stuff sausage, and converse on the guttural fringes of several languages. English, German, Czech, and Spanish are mistreated equally. Within minutes of my arrival I am handed a large quarter of meat to de-bone and the months that I'd been gone seem like only stories to tell.

"Hoelscher what is this that I'm de-boning?"

"Oh, me and Phil wanted to try something different this year. There was a wetback at the gravel pit that gave me this recipe. He makes tamales and shares with all the guys at work. He can make tamales out of raccoons and almost anything. We give him a little deer, a little hog ... but then he left. Phil, look behind you and see if there's any more garlic in that grocery sack. I'm going to get a fire going in the stove."

"Hey Herman," said Phil as he dug through the sack looking for garlic. "Have you heard about the fires? I don't remember wildfires in Texas."

"Yeah, I heard something but I don't know what caused them. I'm curious whether that's going to be an ongoing problem. Look at Southern California. That land is burnt-over sand, but it's developed with million dollar homes everywhere. There are people living where folks aren't meant to live. Now, it's catching fire all the time. I reckon the same could happen in South Texas or West Texas. Once the water is sucked out of the land there's nothing left for it to do but burn. But until civilized man has a different way of measuring progress, we're just going to keep spoiling whatever we touch. I'm tending towards staying outside the Dallas, Houston, San Antonio triangle these days. There are too many people. Hey ... Phil, do you know what kind of meat I'm cutting?"

Hoelscher came back from the stove. "Hey Herman, this is your batch of meat. I want you to do the seasoning."

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# FISH TALK ... with Capt. Bill

Saddle up boys and strap on those spurs because the scout looking over the horizon is seeing some prime time fishing ahead.

Conditionally, knowing where to go and what to throw the next couple of months should produce some solid stringers of fish. But taking a little turn, first I'm going to tell you a short story about a client of mine.

Several years back during the month of May I scheduled some groups of my corporate people for fishing out of Port Mansfield. We hunkered down at Capt. Bruce and Shirley Shuler's Getaway Adventures Lodge, a dreamy spot. One of the groups that came down was Everett Industrial supply, Inc. out of La Porte. The owner, Lowell Everitt, a big, burly guy, had recently started fishing with me so I didn't know him very well, but one thing I did know was that he had a lot to learn about fishing with artificial lures.

Let me tell you about our fishing that day. We were wading a muddy grass flat, throwing Bone Diamond Bass Assassins. Lowell was about five yards from me, watching a hook-up every cast and scratching his head, asking what was he doing wrong because he was not getting the same action.

I replied back with a wise crack, "Some people have it and some don't!" He laughed and told me, "I'll deal with you when we get back to the boat." Not really sure what he meant by that, we just kept on fishing.

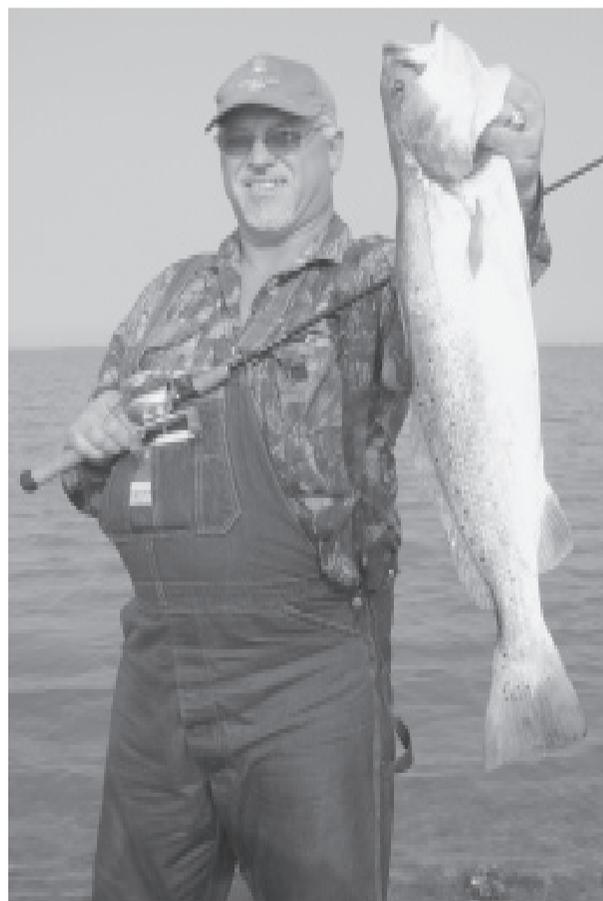
When we did get back to the boat we had close to 40 trout. Now remember I told you how big Lowell is, but to be more specific, he is about 6 ft., 7 inches and his biceps are bigger than my neck. Moving on, as I had just finished putting the last fish in the cooler and while I was still bending over, the next thing I knew there's a big hand grabbing me behind the neck and another hand on my rear side, and I'm being catapulted out of my own boat, about 10 feet into near 4-foot water.

I was laughing and Lowell said, "Some people have it and some don't! Now are you going to help me and tell me what I was not doing right to catch fish?" Right then, Lowell became a client forever and a special friend to me.

Over the past years of fishing with me, Lowell has listened and learned. With some education and the right tackle, Lowell has become an outstanding trout fisherman. Just



**CAPT. BILL PUSTEJOVSKY** of Matagorda shows off a nice speck caught during a recent trip.



**BIG MAN, BIG FISH** — To get a perspective on how big this speck really is, Lowell Everitt checks in a 6 ft., 7 inches tall.

this past June 13 I was on some decent trout and had a cancellation. After picking up the phone and calling Lowell, we agreed to meet at the dock the next morning by 5:30. I loaded up, and my 25-foot Explorer and 250 Suzuki were wide open headed to this special reef in East Matagorda Bay. We were the first ones there and Lowell had everything rigged just right with Roach Bass Assassin.

You can call it luck or whatever you want, but I'm telling you his first cast that morning was a 29-1/2 inch speck. On my scale the trout weighed 8 lbs., 9 oz. and Lowell had just entered the 29-inch club. I snapped some excellent pictures of the two just as the sun was coming up, and they were great shows.

That same morning Lowell released 27, 26 and 25 inch trout to boot, and his last trout of the day was 24-3/4 inches. We were back at the dock all smiles, fully knowing that this was a day neither Lowell nor I would ever forget. By the way, that big fish will be hanging on his office wall.

Usually the first part of September is a little slow. I call it a transition period from summer to early fall. About the middle of September by looking at my records, fishing picks up. Also, you have to remember, we could have one of those Big Blows brewing out in the Gulf. I hope not, but it is that time of year.

Last month, guides using live bait outdid the guides shucking tackle. We were throwing Roach Bass Assassins, She Gogs and Skitter Walks in the heat of the day, catching trout 20-24 inches, 12-18 fish a day. Call it the dog days of summer. We did limit out a couple of days when the surf was right, catching everything on topwaters, mainly the GRCH She Dog. This lure from Mirrolure Company has been a good bait for me.

September fishing could start out a little tough because, as I said, it is considered a transitional month. Shrimp are preparing to stage up in big pods and menhaden and mullet will likely be on the move. Chances are we might have a norther to cool our water down a tad.

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## Analyzing 'the rut'

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anyone familiar with animal husbandry; but much of the outdoor community hasn't processed these concepts to the higher level. Simply put, the hypothesis says that the onset of the annual breeding cycle is caused by the photoperiod (amount of daylight in a day) and not by a fresh cold front. This information cited that the optimum breeding dates in our eco-region were the seven to 10 days after December 14 — every year. It also said that for best results there must be a good buck to doe ratio and a healthy number of older bucks in the herd. Then it's handy to know that prior to the prescribed date 10 percent of the doe population may already be bred.

Armed with this knowledge, deer behavior observations offered new perspectives and possible answers to age old questions. For one, a buck bred a doe on December 10 in the midst of numerous other bucks and none of the animals paid the slightest attention. It was apparent that the dominant male did the deed and that none of the other bucks were incensed because the normal rut was still days away. Nevertheless, the other bucks were beginning to harass does and change the color of their hocks.

Meanwhile, Jason and I had our own dilemma and the impact of the new ideas hadn't sunk home.

"This buck is the main guy around here," I looked at Jason saying. "But we can't take a chance on his age. Let's see if anyone else has seen him and can give us a second opinion. I think he'll be around here if we have an epiphany and decide to come back and whack him."

That night the outfitter gave us a green light to shoot the deer and the next morning, December 14, dawned clear and cool. We took our stand, and the mossy horn cooperated showing up right on schedule. But that's where everything quit going right. Jason peered through his rifle scope for an hour while his candidate strolled between does, posed behind bushes, and stood exposed with its butt turned towards us. Then it lifted its head, sniffed the air, and trotted away.

On December 15, the first day of the optimum seven to 10 day breeding period, the scene changed. There was one 4-1/2-year-old buck at the corn feeder and a multitude of never-before-seen yearlings and two-year olds. The doe count was down and it was difficult to discern whether we were surveying last spring's fawns, or yearling does. The bucks that were 3-1/2, 4-1/2, 5-1/2 years old, and older had grabbed their girlfriends and disappeared to brushy hide-aways.

Not much happened for the next eight to 10 days. The mature bucks had left the feeders and most of the guides reverted to highracking around the ranch in search of a *Muy Grande* too enraptured in tending a doe to pay a vehicle attention. The guides were also practicing their rattlin' with limited results. Then, around that 10-day mark a few weary *Lotharios* began drifting back to the feeders. Throughout this period, practically all the guides remarked that the bucks were with the does but the terminology of "chasing does" was used sparingly. Likewise, during this period there were minimal amounts

of fighting or broken antlers being reported.

Then one week after Christmas, what has been referred to as the height of the rut began to occur. Bucks went to war on each other and broken antlers became the norm. It wasn't uncommon to see multiple bucks chasing one doe and an old guide could clack his dentures to rattle in a troop of lusty rack-headed *Romeos*. Meanwhile, there were more does gathering at the feeders and it was evident that what we'd once called heavy rut action was actually the tail-end of the breeding season. The bucks were competing for the last few females that weren't bred. This activity peaked after New Years' and waned by the middle of January. Then near the end of January I found eight 3-1/2, 4-1/2, and 5-1/2-year-old bucks congregated on a hilltop feeding — oblivious that for more than a month they'd fought and competed.

In retrospect, the evidence not only took steps towards defining "the rut", but it also made huge implications concerning trophy deer management. My conclusion was that, in this region, management bucks needed to be taken out of the herd before they had the opportunity to breed and whenever caught red-handed with a doe. Then likewise, trophy hunts shouldn't be scheduled until after the optimum breeding dates, or December 25. But since I've so often railed against the self-anointed experts writing for magazines and newspapers, I wanted to check my findings with a real expert. I called TPW biologist and whitetail program leader Mitch Lockwood.

**The biologist's report:**

According to Lockwood, many people have questioned whether changing climatic conditions have changed breeding periods. He reiterates that the photoperiod is the baseline for the beginning of a breeding cycle and that by using fetal samples biologists can tell that there have been no significant changes in breeding periods. He also states that as people practice better management, have better habitat, and more mature bucks in the population they notice more rutting action. When the rut is less noticeable it is often an indication of a wider doe to buck ratio, and where there is a deficiency of mature bucks in the herd. This will also extend the breeding season which is less desirable and allows for more predation.

Mitch agreed with the conclusions we'd found and restated the most significant.

"What you've seen makes a lot of sense to me. Now, keep in mind the difference between breeding activity and what hunters call rutting activity. A buck is going to spend a lot of time tending a doe, and they're going to spend a lot of time away from the feeders. And then when you get this intense action 10 to 14 days later, you're seeing competition for the does at the tail end of the cycle.

"As for the management question: A landowner should match their goals to the antler quality they desire to achieve. If I were the landowner, I'd lean towards the strategy of not hunting trophy bucks until after the optimum breeding dates. The flip side is that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. It may be awful hard not to pull the trigger on a buck

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## Fish Talk with Capt. Bill

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Consequently, you will have to fish smart, perhaps using some different techniques and baits.

Some suggestions on innovative fishing techniques could be to try the new cork from Bass Assassins or use the Cajun Thunder with a 18-20 inch leader and a 1/16 oz. lead head rigged with the new Shrimp Cocktail in the Bone Diamond, Redfish, Natural Glow, and of course, the Drunk Monkey. This combination should be very effective with the noisy cork and stinky shrimp tails, or even try the regular 4 inch Sea Shads.

Another bait you can try is the Rebel J20S Broken Back. Eddie Douglas of Bay City buys thousands of these Broken Backs every year and hand paints them, using heavier split rings and #4 owner hooks while painting the eyes red. This bait has proven itself when fishing gets slow. Eddie uses this bait exclusively and I have seen his fish stringers. The back tail even has a red teaser. I can attest to this bait's effectiveness, as it has caught me plenty of trout and reds. Eddie's improvements on these Broken Backs can become very addictive because they work so well.

An enticing addition to any tackle box is Colorite's Tail Dip. I use the chartreuse color and will not throw my Assassins unless they have been dunked in this tail dip. This paint gives my Assassins a flash in the water that trout and reds like. If you are interested in obtaining Eddie Douglas's version of the improved Rebel J20S Broken Back or the Colorite Tail Dip I use, the only place you can find them is Johnny's Sport Shop in Eagle Lake. Mike Grigar's phone number is 979-234-3516 and he will be glad to fill your order.

As I have mentioned in previous articles, in any business you have to possess the right tools to do the job. The lures I mentioned above are a must because fishing requires to be versatile. In other words, what worked yesterday may or may not work today. I will even use a gold or silver spoon at times, if necessary. Other options could include switching from a 1/4 oz. lead head to a 1/16 or 1/8. What I'm trying to get you to see is not to be afraid to change things up.

Sometimes, even when I'm using a topwater bait, I may twitch it hard 5 or 6 times and then let it sit for 10 seconds after that, barely moving it at all. Perhaps I will just walk the dog slow, with a twitch stop, twitch stop, then shake the heck out of it and stop it. Keep changing things up and don't get yourself in a rut by doing the same thing you have been doing for years.

Imperative for any fisherman is a good rod and reel. My choice is a Shimano Crucial 5 ft., 9 in. or 6 ft., 3 in. rod with a fast tip. For a great reel I pick a 100 Curado D or 50 MG. These are excellent products that I have used and do recommend. After 7-1/2 months of use, my 100 D started making sounds,

so I sent it in for repair, which proves to me its durability.

East or West Matagorda Bay — you take your pick — because both of these bay systems are holding quality fish. Be sure to fish water with bait movement and, for Heaven's sake, don't be afraid to change your tackle, lures, colors, or even the way you present your lure in the water.

One last secret I will divulge is the scent called Bang. I might use either the shrimp, garlic or menhaden smell on all my Bass Assassins, and it works. Best flavor is garlic. Wear your kill switch, be safe on the water and God Bless!

(Capt. Bill Pustejovsky, formerly of Bellville, can be reached at (979) 863-7353 or [captbill@goldtipguideservice.com](mailto:captbill@goldtipguideservice.com).)



**AREN'T THEY CUTE?** — These albino whitetails were snapped during a visit to a deer feeder.

## Analyzing 'the rut'

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if it offers a landowner quite a bit of income. Landowners must balance economics and biology. So, if I were a landowner and wanted maximum antler quality, and only had friends and family hunting, I'd probably not let them shoot trophy bucks until after the optimum breeding dates.

"There has been breeding success research done by Dr. Randy De Young at Texas A&M, in Kingsville. It's fascinating to see how poor a buck's breeding success is to contributing to a population. A buck may breed a lot of does, but they only contribute 2.17 fawns to a population in that buck's lifetime. Those stats shock a lot of folks. But that was found over an 11 year study and took in fawns that made it to at least six months old. So, the goal for someone trying to increase antler quality is to have their trophy bucks contribute more than 2.17 fawns during its lifetime. The only way to do that is to eliminate the bucks you don't want to breed.

"Now if you've been taking out the management bucks and have a trophy buck that is six, seven, or eight years old, hopefully it's already made its contributions and you may consider taking it earlier in the season."

For more whitetail management research information: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).

Editorials published in the TSA newsletter may contain opinions of the author and are not to be taken as a position of the Texas Sportsman's Association. Members of TSA may submit stories, a photo or editorials for possible inclusion in future newsletters.

## Looking down from the Saddle

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“Why is this my batch?”

“Oh, me and Phil wanted you to show us the way you season with pepper so that you always have to keep a beer in one hand while your eating sausage.”

“Shoot boys, that’s when you know you’re eating good sausage. Let me see ...” I left my station and went to the table where Hoelscher had been mixing meat. I grabbed the red pepper, popped off the lid, then grabbed the black pepper and did the same. Then I began dumping liberally throughout the 60-or-so pounds of ground meat. “Hoelscher, this meat looks blue. Did y’all mix this with wild hog?”

“Yeah, there’s some wild hog in this.”

“What else?”

Hoelscher started coughing from the pepper.

“You know I shot one of those Blue Bulls on the King Ranch this year,” said Phil.

Hoelscher cleared his throat. “You know that wetback told me to put lots of garlic in with this meat. Herman, use a double-dose of garlic and put in some extra salt. I’ve got some casings soaking and we’ll be ready to stuff as soon as you finish.”

Phil was slicing more garlic, glancing around the room and began talking into the air.

“You know it’s a darn shame they closed those horse killing plants.” Hoelscher snorted and almost spit up a mouthful of Old Crow. “I just don’t know what’s going to happen. They’ve cratered the horse market and now there will be horses turned out to starve, or folks will have to just take ’em down behind the barn and shoot ’em, leave ’em for the buzzards and coyotes. How are they going to make dog food, or glue, or baseballs? Dadgummit, you’d think they’d at least feed ’em to the Frenchmen!”

Hoelscher was turning red and having a coughing fit. He must have swallowed something down the wrong pipe.

“Yeah,” I agreed. “You know our state senator tried to fix that, but he got so many hateful phone calls that he’s not going to try again. It’s just another instance of urbanized mentality having more votes and a louder voice than the rural common sense. It’s kind of like the issue about the wolves in Yellowstone or the jackasses that want to shuffle Texas water all over the state ... Wait a minute.”

Hoelscher stood with his face in the corner laughing, coughing, and wiping tears from his eyes. Phil was lunging from side to side and grinning in gleeful agony.

“Hoelscher? What kind of meat is this?”

“Come here Herman, I think you need some Old Crow.”

Phil bolted for the door.

“Hey Phil!” I hollered after him. “Where’s Howard?”

Hoelscher patted me on the shoulder and handed me the jelly jar jigger.

“Here Herman have a sip.”

“Hoelscher, where’s Howard?”

“You don’t want to know,” and he glanced at the pile of meat.

Three big swallows downed the whiskey.

“Oh damn ... Hope he tastes good.”

## Average buck

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“We do some trapping on the King Ranch and work with Mickey Hellickson. But to get a lot of deer caught over a large area we also do a lot of work with the guys at Texas Parks & Wildlife like Mitch Lockwood and Clayton Wolf. It usually takes three or four years to gather enough DNA samples in a particular area to be able to track deer through DNA. If you’ve got several thousand acres with several hundred deer in the population, you’ve got your work cut out for you.

Young went on to explain why the average successful white-tail buck only contributes 2.17 offspring in its lifetime.

“Since we’ve said that most of the does get bred during the optimum breeding dates. It’s easy to understand that with so many does coming into estrous at one time, there will be singular opportunities for bucks to breed does. The rest of the bucks aren’t just hanging around watching, they’re trying to breed does too. There’s a lot of competition. But understand that we’re talking about averages. There are bucks that never sire offspring and there are bucks that may sire a few more. In populations where there are good age structure for the bucks, there are still 25 percent of the fawns being sired by the 1-1/2 and 2-1/2 -year old bucks.”

Young answered the age-old question about buck-to-doe ratios, saying that anything from a one-to-one to a one-to-three was considered acceptable. The 2.17 lifetime success rate was most noticeable when there is more breeding competition. Whenever there is a larger spread in the buck to doe ratio there is less competition and the lifetime average is harder to discern.

The reason it’s harder to discern, Young said, is because too many deer are normally being killed out of such populations to provide a gathering data base.

“You can’t look at a picture or a B&C score and know that this is the buck that’s doing the breeding. Now we’re studying what makes a few bucks more successful breeders.”

In Young’s studies, fawns had to reach six months in age before they were counted as offspring and a member of the population. Young enjoys that his research benefits hunters and wildlife managers.

### Optimum Breeding Dates

Blackland Prairies.....	October 27
Crosstimbers and Prairies .....	November 5
Edwards Plateau .....	November 16
Gulf Prairies and Marshes .....	October 21
High Plains .....	November 25
Pineywoods .....	November 11
Post Oak Savannah .....	October 27
Rolling Plains .....	November 25
South Texas Plains .....	December 14
Trans Pecos .....	November 28

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