

PERFECT NUTRITION | NEXT LEVEL SUCCESS | OF CATTLE AND DEER

WHITETAIL NEWS

ISSUE 36-2
\$8.95

**GREATEST
SEASON YET**

**THE POWER
OF FIRE**

**BUILD THE
BEST PLOTS**

**POST-SEASON
SCOUTING**



**WHITETAIL
INSTITUTE**
RESEARCH = RESULTS
Since 1988



— SET THE PACE.

EVERY BOW WE'VE MADE WAS BUILT FOR ONE REASON: TO GIVE YOU AN EDGE WHEN NOTHING ELSE DOES. OUT THERE, THE RULES BELONG TO MOTHER NATURE. SHE'S FAST. SHE'S RUTHLESS. SHE'S BEEN WINNING SINCE THE BEGINNING. THAT'S WHY WE'VE SPENT DECADES CHASING EVERY OUNCE OF PERFORMANCE, EVERY ADVANTAGE, EVERY BREAKTHROUGH. THE 2026 ARC IS THE SHARPEST EDGE YET — YOUR CHANCE TO STEP INTO HER WORLD AND STACK THE ODDS IN YOUR FAVOR.

ARC





FEATURES

HUNTING

10 BEAT YOUR NEIGHBOR

It's important to maintain a good relationship with your neighbors, but there's nothing wrong with taking steps to hold more deer on your land.

■ By Travis Faulkner

FOOD PLOTS

16 A LAZY MAN'S FOOD PLOT

Taking food plot shortcuts might save time and effort, but they often lead to failure and frustration.

■ By Matt Harper

MANAGEMENT

22 THE NEWTON JENNINGS FAMILY AND THEIR FALL LINE HUNTING PROPERTY: OLDE MARITIMA

A Georgia family's habitat management efforts pay off with two great bucks and unbreakable bonds.

■ By W. Carroll Johnson III, Ph.D.



FOOD PLOTS

28 DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

Gold-standard status isn't something you can simply order online. It's an honor that's earned through decades of hard work and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

■ By Kristopher M. Klemick

MANAGEMENT

32 THE BENEFITS OF FIRE FOR FOOD PLOTS

Planning and careful coordination are cornerstones of controlled burning, which can yield enormous benefits for your habitat on your land.

■ By Alan Clemons



32

HUNTING

36 SCOUT AFTER THE SEASON FOR THIS FALL'S BUCK

The post-season provides a golden opportunity to find sign and other information to put you in perfect position on a buck next fall.

■ By Gerald Almy

MANAGEMENT

40 CREATING A HAPPY PLACE

Whitetail Institute's Next Level Consulting program provides a helping hand for food plotters who hope to take their land management efforts to, well, the next level.

■ By Gordy Krahn

FOOD PLOTS

44 FINDING THE TRUTH: NUTRITION VERSUS INTAKE

To really manage deer nutrition, you must consider nutrition and intake in combination.

■ By Matt Harper



44

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 | A MESSAGE FROM THE GM
- 6 | SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING
- 8 | ADVANCED FOOD PLOTTING
- 48 | MY TROPHY WHITETAILS
- 50 | FIRST DEER
- 54 | BACK-40 NOTEBOOK



OFFICERS AND STAFF

- WILLIAM COUSINS / GM WHITETAIL INSTITUTE
- DAWN MCGOUGH / BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER
- JOHN WHITE / INSIDE SALES MANAGER
- CHASE DUNCAN / INSIDE SALES REPRESENTATIVE
- DREW GILKERSON / NATIONAL SALES MANAGER
- TREY ADKINS / DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
- CLARE HUDSON / TERRITORY MANAGER, NORTHEAST
- JOE THOLE / TERRITORY MANAGER, MIDWEST
- DR. CARROLL JOHNSON, III.
- DR. JOYCE TREDAWAY / AGRONOMIST AND WEED SCIENTISTS
- JODY HOLDBROOKS / WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST
- JON COONER / MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
- BRIAN LOVETT / WHITETAIL NEWS SENIOR EDITOR
- KRIS KLEMICK / EDITOR
- GERALD ALMY, MATT HARPER / FIELD EDITORS
- WADE ATCHLEY / ATCHLEY MEDIA ADVERTISING DIRECTOR



LEVERAGE OUR 38 YEARS OF MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Reflecting on 38 years in business, I am proud to affirm that our commitment to our founding principles remains strong — educating and assisting hunters and land managers to enhance their deer herds and steward their land. This dedication fuels the industry-leading quality of our products and services. At Whitetail Institute, the Golden Rule — treat others as you wish to be treated — guides us and embodies our highest standards. Our customer service and product integrity are unmatched. If you have questions about soil, weeds,

whitetails, forages or habitat management, our team is ready to help. I encourage you to reach out and learn how our Next Level Consulting division can provide personalized expert guidance to optimize your land, deer herd and hunting experience. With more than three-and-a-half decades of refining the food plot industry, we believe knowledge is power, and sharing that knowledge is our passion. The choices we make today are crucial to preserving the land for future generations. For tailored advice and strategies,

contact our Next Level Consulting division. The mission is simple: To deliver high-quality science-based products and services — thoroughly researched and tested — coupled with expert support via phone, email or boots on the ground. Let us help you leverage our 38 years of experience to enhance your land management efforts and success.

—William Cousins



SINCE 1981

**CHESTNUT HILL
OUTDOORS**

TREES FOR DEER GROWTH

Tree-Driven Solutions for Lasting Landscapes.

Chestnut trees produce sweet, high-energy mast that wildlife return to year after year. With consistent early-season drops and fast-growing, hardy trees, they help create reliable food sources that keep activity close and predictable. Plant once and enjoy decades of improved habitat, healthier land, and better days outdoors.

CHESTNUTHILLOUTDOORS.COM

855.386.7826 • chestnuthilloutdoors@gmail.com



SHOP ONLINE

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ATV'S ABILITY

Till-Ease
QUALITY TILLAGE EQUIPMENT

MODEL TP CULTIPACKERS

- 48", 60" & 72" wide models
- Individual cast iron packer wheels mounted on a solid shaft.

**AVAILABLE
AS 3-POINT OR
PULL BEHIND.**

AcrtEase
QUALITY PULL MOWERS

44-INCH & 57-INCH ROUGH CUT MOWERS

- 19-27 HP electric start engine options.
- Deck height adjustment from 2-8 inches.
- Twin blade design for added mulching.
- 4 tires for added support and close trims.



Till-Ease
QUALITY TILLAGE EQUIPMENT

CHISEL PLOW MODEL 760

- 60" wide Chisel Plow / Cultivator with rigid shanks, cutting coulters and electric lift.
- Very aggressive top of the line UTV tillage tool capable of deep tillage work.

FEATURES

- 43"-60" Tillage Width
- Electric Lift with UTV Operator Controls
- Rigid Shanks for Better Ground Penetration
- Narrow Chisel Points & 9" Wide Field Cultivator Sweeps Included
- 7 Front Cutting Coulters
- Till up to 6" Deep
- Pull with UTV's and Small Tractors

LIFE AT EASE

WITH KUNZ ENGINEERING INC.



**AVAILABLE
AS 3-POINT OR
PULL BEHIND.**



SCAN QR

AND MAKE A WORKHORSE OUT OF YOUR ATV!
WITH EQUIPMENT SPECIFICALLY MADE FOR IT!

KUNZ
ENGINEERING INC.

2100 Welland Road, Mendota IL 61342
(815) 539-6954 • www.Kunzeng.com

SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING

by W. Carroll Johnson III, Ph.D. – Agronomist and Weed Scientist



A REFRESHER ON USING NITROGEN FERTILIZERS IN FOOD PLOTS

Nitrogen fertilizers are the cornerstone in the production of many food plot crops. Don't let their high cost discourage you from applying recommended amounts.

If you want to stump somebody on a piece of real-world trivia, ask them about the most common element in the air we breathe. I will wager that most will answer oxygen. Nope. The answer is nitrogen, at 78 percent. Why is that relevant when discussing nitrogen fertilizers? The vast amount of nitrogen fertilizer used to fertilize plants originates from atmospheric nitrogen. The chemical engineering process that captured inert

atmospheric nitrogen and converted it into a chemically reactive building block for other nitrogen compounds is the Haber-Bosch process. The chemical building block is ammonia, which can be easily converted into ammonium, nitrate and urea. The driving force for the Nobel Prize-winning research that led to the Haber-Bosch process was a cost-effective method to make nitrogen fertilizer. This was a breakthrough in agricultural science. The discovery allowed for more widespread use of nitrogen fertilizers and increased crop yields. There is much more to this story than just the synthesis of nitrogen fertilizer, and I encourage you to Google Haber-Bosch or purchase the book *Alchemy of Air* by Thomas Hager.

Nitrogen fertilizers are a cornerstone in the production of many forage crops grown in food plots, including brassica forages, cereal grains, sugar beets, chicory and sorghum. These crops have a high nitrogen requirement. Legume crops — clover, alfalfa, soybean, pea and sunn hemp — have a symbiotic relationship with soil-inhabiting bacteria that convert atmospheric nitrogen from air spaces in the soil to a usable form of nitrogen. Legume crops usually do not need supplemental nitrogen fertilizer.

Nitrogen is used by plants to make amino acids, the building blocks for proteins. Those proteins are essential for the structural components of plants. Nitrogen is also a component of

chlorophyll, the pigment that captures light and energizes the processes associated with photosynthesis. Plants deficient in nitrogen are stunted and have yellowish leaves (called chlorosis). Plants with adequate nitrogen have vigorous growth and a deep green color. Nitrogen alone does not optimize plant growth, and a correct balance with other plant nutrients is needed. Nitrogen is only one piece of the plant nutrition matrix.

NITROGEN FERTILIZERS

Three primary forms of nitrogen fertilizer are used in food plots: ammonium, nitrate and urea. Which is the best nitrogen fertilizer source for food plots? All nitrogen forms will work, but that question is best answered by availability. Simply, the best nitrogen fertilizer source for food plots is the one readily available when needed. It's important to understand the qualities of major nitrogen fertilizer sources and use them correctly.

Ammonium fertilizers: Ammonium sources of nitrogen are completely synthesized. Common ammonium-based fertilizers are ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, di-ammonium phosphate and anhydrous ammonia. In bagged fertilizers, ammonium-based nitrogen fertilizers are often combined with other nitrogen sources. For many decades, ammonium nitrate was a commonly used nitrogen fertilizer. However, ammonium nitrate is an explosive and presents unique storage challenges at dealers. As a result, ammonium nitrate is heavily regulated and for practical purposes unavailable. Anhydrous ammonia is a gas that requires specialized equipment to apply, and it's not feasible for food plot use.

Nitrate fertilizers: Nitrate fertilizers can be naturally occurring or synthesized. Naturally occurring nitrates are mined as sodium nitrate in arid regions of Chile, a mainstay source of supplemental nitrogen before the development of the Haber-Bosch process. Nowadays, most nitrate fertilizers are synthesized. Common synthesized nitrate fertilizers include calcium nitrate, potassium nitrate and ammonium nitrate. In commercial agriculture, nitrate fertilizers are premium (that is, costly) products and used on high-value crops that have specific nutritional needs.

Urea fertilizer: Urea is a common nitrogen fertilizer that's synthesized from a chemical reaction of ammonia with carbon dioxide. When formulated as dry fertilizer, urea contains 46 percent nitrogen (46-0-0) and is the highest concentration of nitrogen available in dry fertilizer. Urea is the least costly form of nitrogen fertilizer because of its ease of manufacture. Additionally, concentrated urea offers many logistical advantages when managing food plots in remote locations, including fewer bags of fertilizer to transport. Finally, fertilizers with urea are readily available at most dealers and retail outlets.

Urea is a versatile fertilizer and commonly blended with other nitrogen sources. An example is 34-0-0, which contains 34 percent nitrogen (24.5 percent from urea and 9.5 percent from ammonium sulfate). Some premium urea fertilizers are coated

with sulfur or a polymer for controlled release, which improves efficiency. Urea can be formulated to be mixed with water and applied as a foliar fertilizer spray to "spoon-feed" nitrogen to certain crops.

Urea fertilizer has some important quirks that require additional discussion. A natural process in the soil converts urea to ammonia (a volatile gas), then to ammonium and finally to nitrate for plant uptake through the roots. Urease, a naturally occurring enzyme in the soil, converts urea to ammonia. This step in the chemical transformation is the basis for two disadvantages of urea-based nitrogen fertilizers. Urea changes to volatile ammonia, and some of the nitrogen is lost to the atmosphere if the fertilizer is left on the soil surface and not mixed with the soil. Similarly, the high concentration of ammonia gas at the soil surface can be toxic to young crops at the seedling stage of growth. Both issues are exacerbated during hot summer weather conditions, which speeds the chemical conversion from urea to ammonia. Applying the full amount of concentrated urea fertilizer onto the soil surface in one application increases the chances for significant nitrogen loss and ammonia toxicity.

Some commercially available fertilizer additives temporarily inhibit the soil-inhabiting urease enzyme that converts urea to volatile ammonia. Urease inhibitors are additives blended with bulk fertilizer that help lessen nitrogen loss through ammonia volatilization. Managing nitrogen loss and ammonia toxicity does not necessarily require the additional expense of using a urease inhibitor. Simply altering food plot management practices helps lessen that risk, such as using ammonium or nitrate fertilizers; applying urea before planting, and lightly mixing with the soil using a disk harrow; and splitting the urea rate such that half is applied before planting and half 30 days after planting.

CONCLUSION

Fertilizers remain costly — especially nitrogen fertilizers. Do not let the high cost of nitrogen fertilizer discourage you from applying recommended amounts of nitrogen. If you are going to invest in food plots, do it right by not compromising on nitrogen fertilizer. Otherwise, forage growth will be subpar, and forage quality (nutrition and flavor) will be compromised. The nitrogen recommendations on the Whitetail Institute soil test report are based on what is needed for optimum forage productivity without the wasted expense of overtreatment. Pay careful attention to statements on the soil test report regarding splitting nitrogen fertilizer applications between two applications; half applied immediately before planting harrowed into the soil and the remainder applied 30 days after planting. Regardless of the nitrogen fertilizer source, split applications add efficiency to nitrogen fertilizer use.



ADVANCED FOOD PLOTTING

State-of-the-art tips and techniques for high-level land managers

■ by Joyce Allison Tredaway, Ph.D. – *Agronomist and Weed Scientist*



HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL FOOD PLOT

Weather aside, several critical considerations determine whether a plot grows or fails.

I had my seed ready, soil sampled, and fields limed and fertilized. Everything was in place, except the one thing nobody can control: rain. I waited through April and May, watching the forecast and hoping for a window. The saying might be April showers bring May flowers, but this year, we had neither. With temperatures climbing and a storm finally predicted, I planted during the last week of May. Then the bottom fell out, and temperatures dropped into the 40s. In places such as northern Alabama, 80-degree spring days can be followed by 40-degree nights, and November can feel like summer one week and winter the next. Weather, especially temperature and rainfall, is rarely predictable.

That's not the recipe for a how-to success story. Yet despite unpredictable weather and less-than-ideal timing — conditions many land managers know too well — the plots did fine.

So, what is the key to successful food plots? Although we cannot control the weather, we can control several foundational factors that determine whether a plot struggles or thrives.

LOCATION: SUNLIGHT MATTERS

Food plot location can be the difference between success and failure. Specific requirements vary by species, but most food plot crops require at least six hours of direct sunlight per day. This should come as no surprise, as plants make their own food through photosynthesis, a process that depends on capturing sunlight.

Plants are commonly categorized as C3 or C4 based on how they process carbon dioxide during photosynthesis. The name refers to the first stable compound formed during the process.

C3 Plants: C3 plants use carbon dioxide directly from the air to make food, which works well in cool, moist conditions. How-

ever, when temperatures are high or water is limited, C3 plants become less efficient because the enzyme they use can react with oxygen instead of carbon dioxide. This causes energy loss and slows plant growth. As a result, C3 plants perform best in cooler, moderate environments with adequate moisture and lower light stress.

Common C3 food plot species include rye, oats, clover, alfalfa, soybean and brassicas.

C4 Plants: C4 plants have an extra step that helps them photosynthesize more efficiently in hot, sunny environments. They first capture carbon dioxide into a four-carbon compound and move it to a special part of the leaf where food production takes place. This process reduces energy loss and helps the plant save water.

Because of this system, C4 plants are more efficient during high temperatures, high light intensity, low atmospheric carbon dioxide and drought conditions.

Examples of C4 plants include corn, sorghum and warm-season grasses.

The bottom line in choosing the correct species for your food plots: C3 plants are the better choice for areas where sunlight is limited by shade.

DRAINAGE ISSUES: AVOID THE EXTREMES

Questions about moss, rushes and nut-sedge are common and point to the same underlying issue: poor drainage. These species are hydrophilic, or water loving, meaning they thrive in overly wet conditions.

You can't always choose where a food plot goes, but when you do, adequate drainage should be a priority.

Avoid areas that hold water for extended periods. These zones are better suited for native vegetation adapted to high moisture. On the opposite extreme, very sandy soils that cannot retain moisture present a different challenge. The best food plots strike a balance — holding enough moisture to support rooting while draining excess water to prevent root stress.

SOIL TESTING: A NON-NEGOTIABLE STEP

A soil test is not optional. It's essential. Soil testing identifies specific nutrient requirements (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and micronutrients) as well as soil pH. This data lets you make science-based decisions instead of guesses.

Without a soil test, food plotters typically over- or underfertilize, wasting money and compromising plant performance. Seed is often the most expensive investment in a food plot. A proper soil test ensures that investment has the best chance to succeed.

MATCH SEED SELECTION TO SOIL TYPE

As an agronomist and weed scientist with Whitetail Institute, I have seen many well-intentioned failures caused by poor crop-soil matching. At a site visit in southern Alabama, conducted with wildlife biologist Jody Holdbrooks of Next Level Consulting, the soils were deep and sandy. The landowner insisted on planting clover — a decision almost guaranteed to fail.

Clover is shallow-rooted and performs poorly in sandy, drought-prone soils. After all, a sandy soil is always a week away from a drought. In this situation, chicory was the better perennial option because of its deep taproot. Although not risk-free, it's considerably more drought-tolerant than clover.

A system built around natural plantings is even better in such soils, provided that managers are disciplined about timing and plant only when adequate soil moisture is present.

MATCH SEED SELECTION TO SLOPE

Slope presents another challenge that's often overlooked. At a site visit, a grower planted clover and chicory late on a steeply sloped field. A heavy rainfall followed soon after planting. Because these species were slow to emerge, much of the seed washed downhill before establishment.

A fast-emerging wildlife mix that stabilizes the soil quickly is a better option in highly sloped fields. Rapid establishment reduces erosion, holds seed in place and creates conditions that allow slower-emerging species to follow. A good choice in such cases is No Plow, which contains a variety of forage ryegrass, a quickly germinating and fast-establishing annual grass with an extensive root system. In addition, planting via a no-tillage system rather than conventional tillage will allow exact placement of the seed with a drill and prevent further soil erosion of a sloped field.

PLANTING DEPTH: SHALLOW IS BETTER

Most food plot species — clover, chicory, brassicas and vetch — require a planting at a depth of only ¼ to ½ inch. When planted too deep, seedlings exhaust their limited energy reserves before reaching the surface, resulting in stand failure.

Whether planting conventionally or using a no-till system, seed should rest just beneath the soil surface with good seed-to-soil contact. This factor has an outsized impact on establishment success. A cultipacker, an implement that uses focused weight from cast-iron press wheels

to pulverize clods with downward pressure, creates a condition of intimate contact of small crop seed with surrounding soil particles.

START CLEAN: WEED CONTROL FROM DAY 1

As a weed scientist, I cannot overemphasize the importance of starting with a weed-free seedbed. Emerging seedlings cannot compete with established weeds, and weeds almost always win.

Weeds are highly adaptable, tolerating drought, excess moisture, fertile soils and poor fertility. A clean start is critical. Glyphosate provides excellent grass control, and a combination of triclopyr plus 2,4-D controls annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. With minimal soil residual activity, planting can typically occur three weeks after application.

Herbicide options in food plots are limited, and chemical control alone is not enough. Cultural weed control, achieved through strong crop competition, is equally important. Thin stands — whether caused by poor seed quality, drought, heavy grazing pressure or improper planting — invite weed problems later in the season.

A dense, healthy stand is your best long-term weed control tool.

HERBICIDE COMPATIBILITY

Options are limited, but the post-emergence herbicides Arrest Maxx and Slay Maxx are labeled for use with specific Whitetail Institute products. Understanding compatibility before planting can save time and money later.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Successful food plots are rarely the result of perfect weather or ideal timing. They are built on informed decisions and a management plan prepared in advance — matching crops to site conditions, preparing soil properly, planting at the correct depth and starting clean. When these fundamentals are in place, even unpredictable seasons can still produce successful results.





■ Following a proven game plan can help you transform your hunting property into a whitetail sanctuary.

BEAT YOUR NEIGHBOR

■ Text and Photos by Travis Faulkner



It's important to maintain a good relationship with your neighbors, but there's nothing wrong with taking steps to hold more deer on your land.

If you're a diehard deer hunter, you've probably realized that it's something far beyond a hobby or pastime. It's a passion that's in our blood and constantly on our minds, which is why we are always looking for ways to improve our skills and enhance our hunting locations. To make the latter happen, you first must learn to correctly evaluate your hunting land and the land that surrounds it. You need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of both while finding ways to ensure that your ground is better for whitetails than the neighboring properties. You can achieve that by implementing a high-impact land management plan that will let you get the jump on your neighbors by transforming your favorite lease or private ground into a target-rich whitetail sanctuary this fall. Let's get started.

ESTABLISH GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Without question, one of the first things you need to do is try to establish a solid mutual relationship with the surrounding landowners and hunting lease holders that border your ground. The goal is to maximize the full potential of your hunting property or lease, and forging good relationships with those around you can help you accomplish that much easier and faster with far less aggravation. Through the years, I've experienced both ends of the neighboring-property-hunting-relationship spectrum, and a good friendship is hands-down the best way to go.

There are so many short- and long-term benefits to creating and maintaining these crucial relationships. For starters, just discussing your overall deer management goals with neighboring hunters might lead to shared management practices. If you're giving young bucks with good genetic potential a pass to reach maturity and your neighbors are relentlessly gunning down anything that's brown, it's going to be very difficult to get the most out of your hunting ground. Being on friendly terms with your

neighbors might help you establish shared or at least similar management goals that will ultimately benefit everyone, including the overall health of the deer herd.

It's also important to remember that whitetails don't read property signs or follow trespassing rules, especially during the rut or throughout various activity transition periods. Chances are at least a percentage of the whitetails you're routinely seeing on your trail cameras will likely be on your neighbor's ground some, too. Plus, at some point, you might have to ask permission to track and recover a deer that has crossed property lines. Your willingness to help neighboring hunters by possibly loaning out equipment, monitoring each other's property to prevent trespassing from outsiders, pitching in on management work, or offering to assist them track and drag their deer out of the woods can go a long way in establishing these mutually beneficial relationships.

BEEF UP YOUR HUNTING GROUND

Although you want to maintain good relationships with the neighbors, there's also an unspoken competition that comes with pursuing mature whitetail bucks. Few things irk a diehard deer hunter more than seeing a monster buck in which you've invested so much time and effort in scouting and hunting end up on someone else's social media page and hanging on their wall. That's especially true if you've watched a buck grow into a giant and have let him walk numerous times. All the hard work managing your property, and the countless hours of scouting, hanging tree stands, and hunting a target buck with which you have a long history can end in heartache when he crosses onto your neighbor's land.

That's why you need to do everything possible to attract and, most important, keep whitetails on your property for as long as possible. That means beefing up your land by providing year-round nutrition, mineral licks, watering holes,



■ Provide a variety of feeding options by strategically selecting specific seasonal whitetail blends and mixes to plant throughout the entire year.

thick cover, minimal disturbances and controlled hunting pressure. A high-impact game plan can provide all of these whitetail essentials while adding anything neighboring properties lack. The good news is you don't have to own or lease the largest property in your area, because with these neighbor-beating strategies, quality is better than quantity.

PLANT PERSISTENT PLOTS WITH PRECISE PLACEMENT

No doubt, many serious whitetail hunters are planting whitetail-specific food plots on privately owned and leased tracts of land. There's a good chance that this is already happening on the properties that surround your hunting ground, and in some cases, there might be larger agricultural fields or even commercial farming on a larger scale. Don't let that get you down, because there are several ways you can compete and even outperform your neighbors even if they have larger fields and more land.

For starters, you can separate your land from the pack by what you plant, how you plant it and where you plant your plots. The key is to provide a variety of feeding options by strategically selecting specific seasonal whitetail blends and mixes to plant throughout the entire year. You'll want to provide a variety of food sources throughout the year instead of just one portion of the hunting season. Warm-season plots such as Power-Plant from Whitetail Institute will help attract and hold more deer throughout spring and summer. It's a high-protein forage consisting of forage vining soybeans, iron and clay cowpeas, and sunflowers. It can with-

stand heavy grazing and boosts whitetail nutrition and antler growth, and aids in fawn development.

Then you can rotate and replant these plots with fall and winter mixes such as Imperial Whitetail Beets & Greens, which contains proprietary kale, turnip and radish varieties, along with the sweet attractiveness of sugar beets. Another great option is Imperial Whitetail Fusion, which features premium clover and chicory, and lasts up to five years with one planting. Other great fall/winter options include Winter Peas Plus, Winter-Greens, Tall-Tine Tubers and Whitetail Oats Plus. All of these hardy plots will stay green and provide much-needed nutrition throughout fall and winter. Having consistent food sources with a variety of food types from these scientifically formulated whitetail blends and mixes can prevent your No. 1 buck from roaming onto your neighbor's land.

If you have enough acreage, planting at least one large-scale plot near the center of your property is a great start. Ideally, you can plant it with warm-season blends early and then replant it with cool-season mixes for fall and winter. Another way you can get more bang for your buck is to leave (or even grow and construct) pockets of standing cover around and staggered throughout the inside of the plot. You can quickly provide tall, thick cover around and in patches within your plot by planting Imperial Whitetail Conceal. It grows rapidly to 8 to 10 feet tall and provides much-needed thick cover that'll keep deer feeling safe and secure, which increases daytime feeding activity among super-cautious mature bucks.

It contains whitetail hybrid grain sorghum, whitetail forage sorghum and sunn hemp.

That move alone will let you outperform larger agricultural fields and food plots on neighboring properties, because the standing cover creates a false sense of security among wary bucks. Those older and more experienced shooters have a tendency of shying away from larger open fields during daylight. You can have the largest food plot or agricultural field in the county you're hunting, but it's not very advantageous if bigger bucks are only visiting it after dark.

Another deadly planting strategy you can use in conjunction with or without a larger-scale center food plot is to construct a series of smaller shade-tolerant no-plow ambush plots throughout your land. Specifically designed no-till blends such as No-Plow can be extremely effective and require little maintenance. No-Plow is a high-protein annual blend that can provide up to nine months of attraction and nutrition with minimal work. Secret Spot is one of my favorite ambush plot blends. It includes a broad range of 11 forages selected and combined to provide maximum attraction without the need for heavy farming equipment or extensive ground preparation. Meticulously constructing these smaller ambush plots near the edges of mature buck bedding locations, within staging areas, and along major travel corridors within cover can give you a huge advantage over neighboring hunters.

Constructing a series of smaller no-till ambush plots doesn't require ex-



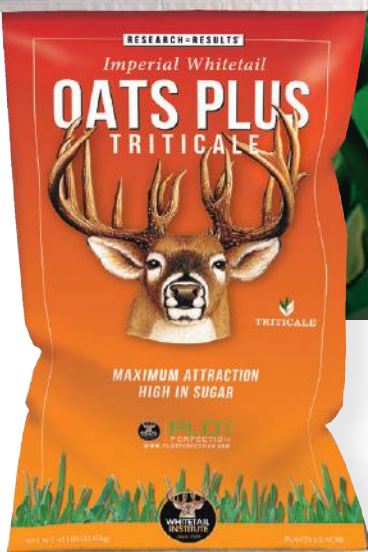
WITH THESE STRATEGIES,
QUALITY IS OFTEN BETTER
THAN QUANTITY.

pensive farming equipment and can be completed with weed-trimmers, rakes, gardening hoes, foldable saws and branch trimmers. The critical advantage these plots produce is that even the most paranoid and skittish bucks feel safe hitting those spots during daylight. In short, the smaller ambush plots provide a big draw with minimal effort and low cost while dramatically increasing daytime feeding activity and shot opportunities.

ADD MINERAL LICKS AND OTHER ATTRACTANTS

If you're competing with your neighbors by trying to attract and hold more deer, you should not overlook the power of adding attractants. It's advantageous to specifically add ones your neighbors don't have on their land. These can include a series of strategically placed watering holes, mineral licks, feeding stations, mock scrapes and a variety of fruit and mast trees.

The great thing about this tactic is that these options can easily be placed along the edge or inside of your ambush plots. You can add watering holes by digging them manually and using a pond-liner to hold the water. Or simply put out a galvanized steel or a cheaper plastic livestock watering trough. In a pinch, a small plastic kiddie pool will do the trick, and those are fairly inexpensive. Adding watering holes to your ambush plots surrounded by cover can be lethal throughout the season, but



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

The Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is an oat based product that is extremely attractive and winter hardy. An oat variety so attractive it was removed from university grain-production trials and shelved due to heavy grazing by deer. This exclusive Oat is only available in Whitetail Institute products.

ORDER TODAY! 800-688-3030 www.whitetailinstitute.com



especially during periods of extreme heat and drought.

Scientifically formulated mineral licks such as 30-06 Mineral Vitamin, 30-06 Plus Protein, Imperial Whitetail 30-06 Thrive Nutritional Supplement (for fall and winter use) and the 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Block are phenomenal attractant options you can add to your ambush plots. It's important to note that attractants such as 30-06 Plus Protein is such a powerful attractant that some states consider it bait, so be sure to consult your local game laws before using it. These attractants, along with constructing mock scrapes and planting a variety of fruit and mast trees near the center of your ambush plots, are additions that will give you a competitive edge over your neighbors and let you attract and hold more deer on your hunting ground. Following this proven game plan will help you transform your hunting ground into a whitetail sanctuary and keep those shooter bucks off your neighbor's wall.



■ Spice up your property by adding a series of strategically placed watering holes, mineral licks, feeding stations, mock scrapes or a variety of fruit and mast trees.

AMERICA'S CHOICE FOR OUTDOOR PRODUCTS SINCE 1954

5' x 6' RUGGED BLINDS

5' x 7' WRANGLER BLINDS

CHOICE OF GROUND LEGS, 4ft TOWER, OR 8ft TOWER • SPACIOUS FLOORPLANS FOR MULTIPLE HUNTERS • FULL SIZE STAIRS & HANDRAILS
CHOICE OF RIFLE OR COMBO WINDOWS WITH SILENT FLIP OPEN OPERATION • BUILT TOUGH & SHIPS NATIONWIDE

GREAT SELECTION OF OUTDOOR PRODUCTS

TEXAS HUNTER
PRODUCTS

3350 IH 35 N
San Antonio, TX 78219
800.969.3337

www.TexasHunter.com

FISH FEEDERS



QUAIL FEEDER



PROTEIN FEEDERS



TROPHY FEEDERS



STAND & FILL FEEDERS



The **FIRMINATOR™**

By Ranew's Outdoor Equipment®



MADE IN AMERICA.
BUILT TO LAST.

MAKE YOUR DIRT WORK

RANEW'S OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT offers the ideal equipment to make food plot planting easier and more effective. The Firminator is the best all-around equipment for hunting food plots and deer management. Ranew's is ready to serve all hunting and land management needs across the USA.



G3 ATV MODEL

G3 MODEL



678.688.3732

THEFIRMINATOR@RANEWS.COM

THEFIRMINATOR.COM



A LAZY MAN'S FOOD PLOT

Taking food plot shortcuts might save time and effort,
but they often lead to failure and frustration.

■ by Matt Harper



“Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth” — Proverbs 10:4.

“A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied” — Proverbs 13:4.

I think you get the idea about where the Bible stands on laziness. In fact, the subject of slothfulness is addressed many times in Proverbs, which was largely authored by Solomon. So I don’t think I need to say more about the expected outcomes of an endeavor between the diligent and the lazy.

These contrasting ways of approach a matter will likely produce similar results no matter the exercise. A football team that has lazy, half-hearted practices will usually lose to a team that has prepared with vigor. If you get ready for bow season by only shooting a few arrows a day or two before the opener, you’re more likely to make a bad shot. When you run over a stick with the lawnmower because you didn’t want to move it, you’ll be working on a broken deck the rest of the day. And yes, those are personal examples.

To be fair, there’s a distinction between laziness and being so busy that you run out of time and take shortcuts. Further, laziness should not be confused with lacking the finances to afford the right tools for the best outcome. Laziness is when you have the time and resources but lack the gumption and work ethic to fully complete all the steps of a project. Being so busy that you cut corners to complete a project in limited time is not lazy. In fact, you might have so many balls in the air that you work to exhaustion just to cover everything. I’ve never considered myself to be lazy, but I often have too many things stacked on my plate. But whether you’re too busy or simply too lazy to complete all the steps correctly, the result will look the same.

In the world of food plotting, few lazy people tackle the concept of building a food plot. They might start but quickly realize it’s going to be harder than what it looked like on TV. I think most people who build plots are really hard-working folks who only have a brief time frame to complete the work. Most of us have jobs, which means you have weekends and vacation days to work on food plots, and that also competes with other obligations. Plus, you’ll have rain-out days, equipment

breakdowns and helpers who don't show up. All of those shrink the window of opportunity, so folks sometimes take shortcuts to get seed in the ground.

When that occurs, people seem to skip some steps more than others or at least do them haphazardly. After almost three decades of planting food plots and working with hundreds of other food plotters, I've compiled a list of six of the most common and damaging "lazy man's" approaches. And I'm pretty sure I have done these, too.

DON'T TAKE A SOIL SAMPLE

When you read the back of a seed bag, most say the first important step is to take a soil sample. Someone unfamiliar with agronomy might wonder why that's so important, because soil is soil. However, soils vary in quality. Further, the same soil type can vary in the condition and nutrient content needed to grow a specific variety of food plot seed. In addition, soil is the basis of a food plot, and not getting that right will always result in some level of failure.

The two major traits a soil sample reveals are the nutrient levels — specifically nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium — as well as micro nutrients and the soil's pH. Plants need nutrients to grow just like animals, and nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are critical nutrients the soil must provide. The need for each will vary depending on the type of forage, but it's almost certain that all soils will lack in one or more of those nutrients. Simply, the food must be there for the plot to work.

Soil pH also indicates the acidity, or alkaline level. Many soils tend to be acidic, but most common food plot varieties perform best in a neutral soil. The soil test will tell you the pH you are starting with, and if the soil is acidic, it will recommend how much lime is needed to bring the soil to neutral. When you plant in acidic soil but your seed variety requires neutral soil, the plot typically fails. A low or acidic pH essentially starves the plants, as it constricts the plant's ability to uptake nutrients. Without doing a soil test, you're flying blind.

DON'T FOLLOW THE SOIL TEST RECOMMENDATIONS

Maybe you took a soil sample but decided you didn't have the time, money or energy to follow through on the recommen-

dation. That can vary from not following the suggestions to the full extent or not doing them at all. You might put down insufficient fertilizer because you question why the plot would need that much. Or maybe your fertilizer doesn't have the right nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium profile. The soil test calls for a specific amount of each, but you might settle for what's available instead of finding the right mix.

The most common problem is skipping or skimping on the lime needed to neutralize the soil. This step can be difficult, especially if you cannot get a professional applicator to apply the lime. In some cases, soils might call for 3 or more tons of lime to an acre. That's a lot of ag lime to haul to the plot, which might not be easy. Then you must figure out how to spread it on the plot. Many methods and equipment can help, but they're expensive, so many people put on less than is required or just forgo the lime. Doing so pretty much condemns the plot.

DON'T PICK THE RIGHT SPOT FOR THE PLOT

This miscue is not talked about as often as others, but it's critical in the success of growing and hunting a food plot. Many people find an existing clearing and decide that's where the plot should go. In some cases, you might get lucky, and it turns out to be a great spot. But other times, the spot can be a dud. Just because the spot made a good hay field doesn't mean it translates to a good plot area. First, the soil needs to be the right type for the forage variety you want to grow. You must make sure you have good access to the plot for the type of equipment you will be using to plant and maintain the plot. Otherwise, you will likely fall victim to the aforementioned shortcuts.

Also, if you're going to hunt the plot, you'd better make sure it's huntable. For example, is there an ingress and egress that allows for minimal detection to reach a stand? Will the prevailing wind work for the spot? Will deer naturally funnel to the area? All of those are important considerations, and sometimes, the easy spot for your food plot is not the best spot for success. You might need to do some clearing, build a road or make a crossing to get equipment across a ditch. All of those require time, money and energy but could also provide the best results.

DON'T PREPARE A GOOD SEED BED

It's time to get your hands dirty as you begin the seedbed preparation by breaking up the soil. Tillage does multiple things to get the seedbed ready. First, it removes, digs up and rolls over the current vegetation in the plot, giving you a weed-free seedbed, at least at the time of seeding. It exposes the soil to allow for maximum seed-to-soil contact, and lets the seed be submerged in the soil at the appropriate depth. A good seedbed is level — the soil, not necessarily the terrain — free of debris and has the right moisture content. It's sometimes difficult and time-consuming to create such a seedbed with typical food plot equipment. Many people use ATV and UTV equipment apparatuses, but if you have a tractor, you likely have a disk to start the job. However, most food plotters don't have a 250-horsepower tractor to pull a 30-foot disc, an 18-inch shank chisel plow or a large field cultivator. Instead, most work with smaller tractors, much smaller tillage equipment and, most important, much lighter equipment. Tilling is about ripping or cutting through sod, roots and debris — digging into the soft dirt and turning or rolling the soil, exposing loose soil. With light equipment, the cutting device doesn't always get through the surface vegetation and subsurface root structure but rather scratches the surface. You can usually get to the soil eventually, but it takes several scratches or passes to do so. After the fifth or sixth time across the field, it's pretty easy to say to heck with it. But you really need to complete another five or six rounds. The result is a partially broken seedbed, partially uprooted weeds and partial areas of open dirt. When you seed, only part of the plot will get good seed-to-soil contact, and you end up with a patchy plot.

Some food plot blends require minimum tillage. That means the soil doesn't necessarily have to be broken up, but you still need to ensure seed-to-soil contact. People make the mistake of seeing a no-till label and think they can toss the seed right on top of sod, leaves or other ground debris. It's hard work to clear these areas before seeding, especially because most of these plots are done with hand tools, but if you don't, you will end up with a plot of sod, leaves and debris.



PLOT PERFECTION

NOW FREE



TAKE YOUR FOODPLOTING TO THE

NEXT LEVEL



- Flexible, detailed journal allowing food plotters to keep historical and current information about all their food plots
- Seamless way for users to track food plot work, results, and trends over time
- Outstanding planning tool for future food-plot tasks
- Everything from integrated mapping to soil amendment and seeding information
- Connected to our Whitetail Institute laboratories for easy submittal of soil tests
- Soil test results appear in Plot Perfection
- One-stop shop for all your food plotting needs and a first-of-its-kind app



WATCH TUTORIAL VIDEO HERE:

*Subscribe **TODAY** at*
www.PlotPerfection.com

Visit <https://plotperfection.com> today or call 1-800-688-3030, and begin building your food plot journal.

NO FOOD PLOT MAINTENANCE

Whether by skill, luck or divine intervention, you manage to build a good looking food plot. For several weeks, you marvel at your creation. After time passes, however, you begin to notice a few weeds in your otherwise pristine field of green. In the back of your mind, you know you have a couple of options. You can use a rotary mower to clip the plot to keep the weeds back or spray the plot to fight the invasion. You end up doing neither, and three to four weeks later, the once-beautiful field of clover has become a weed patch. You ignore it even further, and weeds begin to choke out the clover, so you reluctantly mow it. However, the weeds were so thick and tall, the debris starts to smother the clover. When the snow melts the next spring, the plot is full of weeds, with only a small remnant of the clover. I hate weeds, but they are a fact of life, and maintenance can help prevent that from happening. However, it takes time and effort.

PICKING THE WRONG SEED

If I were to put these considerations in chronological order, this would be at the beginning, because if you choose the wrong food plot product, you're in trouble before you start. All food plot products are not created equally, and randomly grabbing a product off the shelf might not be the right choice. A great example is Imperial Whitetail Clover versus other clovers. You might think I'm saying that because this article appears in Whitetail News, but I'm old enough to have the luxury of saying things how I see them. Imperial Clover is the only clover scientifically and genetically built for white-tailed deer. That means all the characteristics — such as nutrient content, digestibility and hardiness — that best fit a deer food source were put into this product. Why choose a generic clover, even if it might save you a few dollars. The return on investment is far better with a product made for a deer food plot.

Not taking time to understand what

type of forage will work best in the area you plan to plant is another mistake. Is the soil well-drained, or is it heavier? Is the soil rich and fertile, or is it of poorer quality? The answers dictate the type of food plot forage you should plant. Not doing your homework and picking something random will undoubtedly end with frustration.

SUMMARY

Again, I contend that most food plotters are not lazy but just don't have much expendable time. That leads to shortcuts, but unfortunately, not taking the time to do everything right will almost always end in aggravation. And if that happens, you've wasted the time you had for nothing. Take it from me. I've tried every shortcut. But it's rarely worth the time it saved.



WANT TO TAKE YOUR PROPERTY TO THE NEXT LEVEL?



Let Whitetail Institute's Next Level Food Plot Consulting's team of wildlife biologists, agronomist and weed specialists help you improve your property and hold more deer and shoot bigger bucks! Expert advice tailored to your unique property's needs.

CONSULTATIONS INCLUDE:

- ✓ On Site Visit & Property Tour
- ✓ Comprehensive Management Plan
- ✓ PlotPerfection Subscription
- ✓ Planting Schedule & Instructions
- ✓ Hunting Strategy Recommendations
- ✓ Soil Testing



For those who are serious about taking their property to the NEXT LEVEL, contact us today!

1-800-688-3030 • WhitetailInstitute.com



RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL PERENNIALS

Scientifically designed to attract and grow bigger deer. Includes proprietary seeds developed by Whitetail Institute agronomists. Designed to last up to five years from a single planting.

Still the leader since 1988



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE

Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043 • 800-688-3030 • www.whitetailinstitute.com

THE NEWTON JENNINGS FAMILY AND THEIR FALL LINE HUNTING PROPERTY

OLDE MARITIMA



■ Will Jennings poses with the buck he killed during October 2024 in Crawford County, Georgia. This bruiser had a gross score of 171-1/8 and a net score of 151-5/8. Will's Pope and Young buck is tied for No. 2 in Crawford County for archery kills.



■ Newton Jennings, left, and his son Will pose with the buck Newton killed December 2024 in Crawford County, Georgia. The buck had a gross score of 160-4/8 and a net score of 156-4/8. It's the No. 1 buck killed with archery gear in Crawford County.

A Georgia family's habitat management efforts pay off with two great bucks and unbreakable bonds.

■ by *W. Carroll Johnson III, Ph.D.*

Agronomist and Weed Scientist

Several years ago, I had three complicated surgeries on my right hand, all because of tiny thorns from a shrub called barberry. I will spare you the gory details, but after the second surgery, my right hand was in a cast for several weeks. One-handed typing proved futile, and I had to revert to using telecommunications for my daily technical support duties. One of the customers I met initially by a telephone call was Newton Jennings, whose family owns property in Crawford County, Georgia.

The family property is in the geologically confused region called the Atlantic Seaboard Fall Line, which runs somewhat parallel to the Atlantic and Gulf of America coast. It's a transitional area of varying width between the sandy soils of the relatively flat coastal plain and the rolling clay hills of the upland piedmont. The fall line was the ocean shoreline millions of years ago. Currently, it's an area where soil types, topography and vegetation sharply contrast in a seemingly random jumbled mess. Soils in the fall line area are not considered to be productive for row crop yield potential because of extreme variation in soil type and rolling topog-



■ Newton, right, poses with sons Will, left, and Hutch, center, with a buck that Hutch killed.

raphy. However, the region is suitable for orchard crops (pecans and peaches) and cattle. Much of the Fall Line is managed for pine timber. There are pockets of very good soil in the region, but also areas with soil conditions ranging from pure quartz sand to clay galls that are best described by the colloquial expression “hold the world together.” That description is based on an agricultural assessment and not meant to be harsh, because the Fall Line currently has some of the best white-tailed deer habitat in the southeastern United States. White-tailed deer prefer a mixture of habitats, and the geologically confused nature of the Fall Line means a diverse array of browse and cover. Simply, deer thrive in the region.

TRANSFORMATION AND SUCCESS

Newton is a native of Alabama and a graduate of Auburn University, and currently lives outside of Atlanta. He purchased the Crawford County property in 2021. His family named the property Olde Maritima, which loosely translates to old coast — an appropriate name because the Fall Line was the old coastline millions of years ago. Shark teeth and fossilized seashells can be found at Olde Maritima. Newton’s dream was to establish a retreat for his wife and three teenage sons — Will, Hutch and Camp — to spend their free time together as a family. The 870-acre property was largely in pine timber, with significant portions in mature hardwoods. There’s a mistaken notion that the topog-

raphy of the Deep South is reasonably flat. Having toured this property, it has some of the steepest hills and deepest ravines I have encountered. After all, this is the Fall Line — a geologically confused region.

Previous owners relied heavily on grain feeders to attract deer. One of the first managerial decisions Newton made was to enhance the pine woodland habitat on the property by using strategically controlled burning to release native forbs and browse. This was done in sections, not en masse. Controlled burning requires attentiveness to prevailing weather conditions and preparation of firebreaks. Of course, it also takes people to monitor and help control the fire. That’s where Newton’s sons and their friends willingly enlisted (not



THE JENNINGS FAMILY'S
HUNTING SUCCESS CAN
BE ATTRIBUTED TO HARD
WORK TO IMPROVE HABITAT
AND A COMMITMENT TO
FOOD PLOT MANAGEMENT.

A buck with antlers is grazing in a field with autumn foliage in the background. The scene is vibrant with orange and yellow leaves on the trees.

WHITETAIL INSTITUTE
OF NORTH AMERICA
Since 1988

RESEARCH EQUALS
RESULTS

WHITETAIL INSTITUTE HERBICIDE
The Choice is Clear. Our Herbicides are researched and developed to produce high-quality plots.
Less weeds means more quality food and simply more deer.
ORDER TODAY! 800-688-3030 www.whitetailinstitute.com Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043

Two boxes of Whitetail Institute herbicides are shown in the bottom left corner. The box on the left is green and labeled 'SLAY HERBICIDE', featuring a 'BROAD-LEAF CONTROL' badge. The box on the right is blue and labeled 'Arrest MAX', featuring a 'GRASS CONTROL SELECTIVE HERBICIDE' badge. Both boxes include detailed instructions and safety warnings.



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE
OF NORTH AMERICA
Since 1988

Verizon 1:55 PM

Last-Minute Food...

WHITETAIL INSTITUTE
BREAKING GROUND

Products Soil Tests Planting Dates Product Selector Contact

DEAL OF THE MONTH

OPTION 1: \$27.48
(DOES NOT INCLUDE FREESHIPPING)

OPTION 2: \$82.44
Buy 3 bags of Ambush, get 1 Ambush 10 lbs FREE (40 lbs, 1 acre)!
Free shipping on both deals!

TOP ARTICLES THIS MONTH

Last-Minute Plot Success

Ever-Popular Imperial Whitetail NO-PLOW with minimal or complete seedbed preparation

Strategies to Maximize Daytime Deer Movement

FREE E-NEWSLETTER!
BREAKING GROUND



www.whitetailinstitute.com
Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043

THE TWO POPE AND YOUNG BUCKS AND LIKELY FUTURE SUCCESSES ARE SECONDARY TO THE BONDS BETWEEN A FATHER AND HIS SONS.

conscripted) to help with the controlled burning which significantly improved the whitetail habitat at Olde Maritima.

During the first year, Newton had a chance to survey the property for locations of future food plots. As mentioned, the fall line has highly variable soil types. Newton's goal was to establish perennial food plots — ideally white clover. Knowing the challenges of growing perennial white clover in the Deep South, he was looking for sites that were in bottom-land areas (not overly droughty), had a soil that was well drained (but not pure sand) and had adequate sunlight. When food plot locations were determined, soils were tested for acidity and nutrient status. Fortunately, there are nearby limestone quarries that serve the entire region, which ensure easily available supply of that critical material. As mentioned in previous Whitetail News articles, treating soil acidity with limestone is a fundamentally important managerial task in successful food plot management. Newton took advantage of the availability of bulk limestone and religiously treated the naturally acidic soils with limestone and remedial fertilizer. He then planted Imperial Whitetail Clover in 2023.

In the spirit of full disclosure, Newton's weed problems with sicklepod (coffee-weed) and dogfennel brought he and I together. I pointed him in the right direction for a herbicide that would help control sicklepod in his Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot and provided some ideas for long-term management of dogfennel. Those weeds are difficult to control, and there are no quick solutions. Sicklepod and dogfennel remain troublesome in Olde Maritima food plots, but the family is making progress.

The Jennings family's habitat management efforts paid off in 2024. Newton's oldest son, Will, killed a trophy buck during October in an Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot. It had a net score of 151-5/8. Later in December, Newton killed a magnificent buck in another Im-

perial Whitetail Clover food plot, with a net score of 156-4/8. Will's buck is currently tied for No. 2 in Crawford County for archery, and Newton's buck is No. 1 on that list. Both hunting successes can be attributed to the Jennings family's hard work to improve habitat and commitment to food plot management — a year-round effort. The results were two Pope and Young bucks killed by father and son on the same property, only a few weeks apart.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

I began formulating this article after my visit to Newton's property in late November 2025. Originally, I was planning on writing more of a technically themed article on how the habitat and food plots are managed at Olde Maritima. That changed on the return trip, when reflective thoughts took me back to my childhood. In the mid-1960s, my father built a small cabin on Lake Martin in central Alabama, with two young sons providing non-skilled assistance. Money was tight, but my father was committed to creating a retreat for our family to enjoy. The goal was to establish a place for the father and his sons to enjoy the outdoors, and for the boys to grow into responsible, well-rounded young men. In fact, this article was largely written while sequestered at that cabin, with my work station having a commanding view of the lake. I sensed that Newton had the same vision when he established Olde Maritima in 2021 — a heartfelt investment in his sons' future.

I'm not talking about return on investment in the financial sense. Rather, an investment of quality time and sweat equity in parenting. The two Pope and Young bucks and likely future hunting successes are secondary to the bonds between a father and his sons. We need more of this in our sport and society as a whole.





RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE IMPACT

Impact is the next generation soil amendment that releases nutrients and feeds forages in lower pH soils. Turn poor soil or hard to access plots into productive food plots.

Still the leader since 1988



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE

Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043 • 800-688-3030 • www.whitetailinstitute.com



DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

■ Text and Photos by Kristopher M. Klemick

Gold-standard status isn't something you can simply order online.
It's an honor that's earned through decades of hard work
and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

For more than three decades, The Whitetail Institute of North America has shared the same deeply rooted passion, dedication and drive as the hunters and land managers who pursue the company's namesake animal. Successful stewards and habitat managers know they can trust the Institute to provide the best in all things white-tailed deer, in part because the company refuses to rest on its laurels. This commitment to excellence proves time and again why Whitetail Institute was the industry first and continues to be the leader and gold-standard by which all others are measured.

In a world where copycats are quick to jump on board the proverbial gravy train, all you need to do is look at the wide array of companies and products available online or at retail outlets. It seems like every time you turn around, there's a new ad popping up introducing another new company or product claiming to have the best thing you can offer for deer. It's often accompanied by flashy packaging touting ridiculous claims and all of the benefits you should expect. I've never been one for bargain basement products at top tier prices, and more times than not, those products are exactly that — sourced through a general supplier, repackaged and pitched as a premier product.

I'm not here to say the clover container someone picked up at the local feed supply store or the brassica bag that promises "biggest brassicas for the biggest bucks" aren't worth your time or money. Surely, those products will grow. Anything will grow when given the right conditions. And don't get me wrong, prices drive purchases. I get it. Why spend X amount of money on one bag of clover when you can get the same clover for less elsewhere? In a situation where all things were equal, that would make sense, but not all clovers are equal. Consider the clovers in your front lawn or field. They're worlds apart from the clovers in a bag of Whitetail Institute seed.

RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS

When Ray Scott created the Whitetail Institute of North America in 1988, it was born out of several foundational principles that continue driving every decision the company makes today. Scott recognized from the beginning that without significant investment in re-

search and development, his vision for a food plot industry would germinate but likely never set roots. One of his first steps was the hiring of Dr. Wiley C. Johnson, a well-respected and world-renowned agronomist, plant geneticist and professor at Auburn University.

During the next seven years of exhaustive research, crossbreeding and repeated testing of more than 100 varieties of clover gathered from across the globe, the Institute developed its first proprietary perennial clover created specifically for white-tailed deer. It was — and remains — the quintessential clover, thriving across the whitetail's range. It's cold tolerant, and heat-, drought- and disease resistant. It establishes quickly, offers extremely high protein content and is exceptionally attractive to deer.

Scott and his team knew they were ready for their next big task — setting the food plot industry into motion. They had a premier product that was proven in the field by two of the harshest critics; Mother Nature and white-tailed deer. After all, there's no sense offering a product if it doesn't deliver results. And results — much like that gold-standard status for which Whitetail Institute is known — doesn't just happen.

Today, a professional staff including biologists, agronomists, weed scientists and more, all with decades of training and experience, continues to work tirelessly to ensure every product the Institute offers is the best it can be. In fact, the lengths they're willing to go know no end. Even the No. 1 food plot product in the world — Imperial Whitetail Clover, the Institute's flagship offering — is consistently reviewed for improvement.

The company's slogan, Research = Results, isn't just words or a catchy phrase that sounds good on the back of a napkin. It's a commitment to constant innovation and comprehensive research. An incredible amount of time and money is invested into every product the Institute offers. Trusted partnerships with major universities from across the country, along with decades of science-based research and rigorous testing in real-world scenarios across the whitetail's range, ensure the genetic lines of Whitetail Institute seeds remain strong and that results in the field are unmatched. It's partly why Whitetail Institute products from 35-plus years ago are still anchored in the offerings today — because they're the best you can buy.



■ Following in the footsteps of our forefathers, our passion for the outdoors is truly a blessing.

SERVICE EQUALS SUCCESS

Products you can count on in the field are one thing, but Scott knew there was more to running the business than simply offering exceptional products. His commitment to customer service was unwavering, just like the investment in his products. Scott's Golden Rule centered on treating every customer the way he would want to be treated, and it remains the North Star for everyone at the Institute today. From the moment you hear that voice on the other end of the phone, you know the Golden Rule is alive and well.

Customer service has been a huge part of Whitetail Institute's success because no other company has the professional experience, knowledge base and impassioned desire to help people succeed. Customers can call with any questions regarding soil, weeds, seeds, mineral supplements, deer nutrition, growing challenges or others, Whitetail Institute staff are ready and eager to help. That commitment to the customer is unmatched anywhere in the industry. Pick up the phone and give them a call at (800) 688-3030. I've yet to stump the team, nor have I had a question or request go unanswered.

THE NEXT GENERATION

The guiding principles Scott laid out almost 40 years ago are ingrained in everything the Whitetail Institute does today. And as the staff does their part continuing to carry the company forward, each of us are uniquely positioned to ensure the future of hunting,



■ Providing high-quality food sources for deer helps keep the author's oldest son, Kaden, engaged and excited for the outdoors.

land management and a love for the outdoors are also instilled in the next generation. I challenge everyone to introduce someone to the sport and lifestyle we cherish. Give them the opportunity to help with a food plot, create a bedding sanctuary, or carry a rifle, bow, camera or journal into the woods. Our passion is contagious, and the drive to succeed is unparalleled. Show them the blessings of nature, and their world — like yours and mine — will be a more peaceful place. Their thanks will go without saying.





RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE SUPPLEMENTS

Mineral and vitamin supplementation is vital for maximum antler growth. 30-06 mineral and vitamin supplements are scientifically designed and professionally formulated to provide maximum deer nutrition. 30-06 products are also extremely attractive to whitetails.

(30-06 products might be considered bait in some states. Check your local game regulations before using or hunting over 30-06.)

Still the leader since 1988



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE

Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043 • 800-688-3030 • www.whitetailinstitute.com



Planning and careful coordination are cornerstones of controlled burning,
which can yield enormous benefits for your habitat on your land.

■ by Alan Clemons

THE BENEFITS OF FIRE FOR FOOD PLOTS





Controlled burning is one of the best ways to clean up a property, enhance the habitat and help the wildlife that uses it. From songbirds and turkeys to whitetails and small game, all can benefit from a clean palette on which you can work to further improve things.

Also known as prescribed burning, the task sounds simple: Identify the area, light a fire and let it burn. However, it's not that simple, and no one ever should do that. Along with being incredibly dumb, and possibly harming your or neighbors' structures or worse, every state has restrictions for burning. Controlled burns are a big responsibility.

When done correctly in the right conditions, burning will eliminate grasses, leaf litter and duff, and unwanted shrubs or saplings. A winter burn will usually get different results than a late-spring or summer "warm" burn. Revealing the terrain could be new if you've never seen it before.

Fire also helps reduce snakes and ticks — especially the latter. Ticks can survive winter freezes on burrowing animals, such as deer or moose. But a fire eliminates the plants they crawl on and ground litter in which they live.

If you're on a budget, fire can be a beneficial way to stimulate natural browse. Instead of pumping money into supplemental foods, which have their place and time, get a fresh start on your whitetail management with a controlled burning program. It's not a one-time fix-all. Burning is like trapping, in that it requires work, thought and year-round consideration. Helping regenerate and boost natural browse, and then augmenting with supplemental foods or plots, is a great starting point.

STARTING OUT

First, of course, you must have a solid plan before a burn.

"Obviously you want to have a plan about your goals and how burning fits

into those," said Jody Holdbrooks, with Whitetail Institute's Next Level Consulting. "If you don't have a plan and thoughtful consideration, you could open yourself up to liability that you don't want to have any part of."

If you don't know how to burn and don't have the time or desire to learn, hiring a certified prescribed burn manager is your best bet. They can be found in your area through an online search or through your state wildlife agency, forestry commission or agricultural extension service. A CPBM is trained in fire behavior, smoke management and safety, and should offer liability protection under state law. After you identify your whitetail and habitat management goals, possibly working with a wildlife consultant, the CPBM can provide guidance for cold- and warm-weather burns.

"Let's say you have 160 acres in the Southeast, and my ideal thought would be that it's 160 acres of thinned pines and

hardwoods,” Holdbrooks said. “To get the most benefit for deer, take it in four pieces of 40 acres each. If you’re burning 40 acres on a one- to two-year rotation, that first year you’re probably going to get some deer candy food. That would include ragweed, asters, goldenrod, partridge peas and other forbs, all of that being the No. 1 food group from a fire, no question.”

The more you burn, the more you’ll create great food for deer. However, that doesn’t mean you should burn an area every year.

“If you’re running property for deer, you can’t burn every year because you want some structure in there,” Holdbrooks said. “So, you’ll probably be on a two- to four-year burn cycle. The longer you let it go, the more you’re going to have a little woody stuff. But mostly you will have shrubs, bushes and forage that is great for deer, along with some structure.”

MYRIAD BENEFITS

Turkeys and upland birds benefit from burning for whitetail management. But after about three years, that thick woody growth can be iffy for turkeys. They’ll be in the burned zone even while smoke still is coming off remnants, scratching for seeds, grubs or other foods. It’s crazy to think about them returning so quickly, but they do. Deer won’t be far behind when new growth starts emerging. Holdbrooks said if you’re on a dedicated turkey management plan, a two-year burn cycle is most beneficial.

“Turkeys will benefit from your burning for deer, because you’ll have things they and upland birds like quail will use: ragweed, partridge pea, beggar’s lice, pokeweed, blackberry, goldenrod and things like that,” he said. “With that 160 acres we were first talking about, you could zigzag your burning with a 20 to 40 (acres) every two years and leave the other for every three years. Then do one the next and keep turning that rotation over.”

Holdbrooks agreed that a burning program with staggered tracts is akin to the old patchwork farming practice. In today’s big ag world, everything is planted from line to line, fence to fence. Decades ago, farmers would leave a tract fallow for a couple of years and plant another, possibly adjacent. Then they would swap. This

patchwork plan included overgrown fences, old homesite orchards and wet spots allowed to grow raggedy. Patchwork farming worked well to rejuvenate the soils, and the rest allowed small game, quail, turkeys and deer to thrive.

Burning helps achieve similar results today. If you burn 20 or 30 acres this year, with the adjacent tract on plan for a year or two from now, you’ll have a patchwork rotation of nutritious forage and cover.

“The more often you burn on your cycle schedule, the more often you’ll see impressive stuff,” Holdbrooks said. “On every piece of ground, you have native seeds in the dirt waiting to get scarified to grow. Almost anywhere you go, unless man has done something to the soil, you have latent seeds and good seeds waiting to grow under what’s going to be burned. You’ll find that in fields and woody areas.”

That means the quality of browse will be better, fresher and more diverse.

“The structure of the habitat will be better,” Holdbrooks said. “The overall condition of the animals using the areas will be better because of the high-quality food source and protective cover, which deer use for fawns. You’re also getting rid of old growth that’s not producing anymore. When you get to a three-plus year rotation, you’re going to get the soft browse and the structure where they can stay in there. A one- to two-year rotation next to the three- to four-year will offer new food and bedding cover side by side. They can just hop from one to the other.”

NEVER PERFECT

Waiting for the perfect time to burn is like waiting for the perfect time to ask someone out to dinner. If you keep finding reasons to not do it, you’ll never get it done. Before long, you’ll see the pretty girl out at dinner with a guy who burns his property on a regular schedule.

Obviously, you don’t want to burn your property during deer season. That wouldn’t be the end of the world, but it’s not optimal. (The end would be when your lease-holder decides to do a hardwood harvest or thin the pines during deer season.) You probably don’t want to burn it late in summer because plants wouldn’t have time to regenerate before autumn. Tick down the list: turkey sea-

son, spring kids’ sports keeps you away, summer vacation, have to prepare for deer season and — hey, you didn’t get to burn.

See? There’s always potentially an excuse or bad time. Here’s the deal: Spring burns are going to take out some early nesting turkey eggs and songbirds. Maybe some small game. It stinks, but Mother Nature survives and rebounds. The turkeys will come back, possibly even nesting again if they have time. Maybe quail, too. Deer will flee the fire before returning to see what is going on. Plants have time to start growing in summer, and by autumn, your early successional browse should be thriving.

“Most of your burns are going to be cold-weather or winter burns, usually from December to March,” Holdbrooks said. “Not everyone, but a lot of people, maybe are done with deer hunting by February and March. Those generally will be safer burns, and they’re probably doing different things. If you’re burning a pine stand with sweet gums in winter, you’re not going to get nearly the kill on those sweet gums as one in summer with a warm burn. That’s just one example to think about with your planning and goals.”

Burning at various times of year will take care of different species of plants and might reveal native or beneficial plants you haven’t seen in a while.

“Remember those seeds in the ground that need burning to scarify and grow?” Holdbrooks said. “You probably will see some of that. Start with a cold-season burn, and after a few of those, maybe move to a warm-season burn to be a little more intensive.”

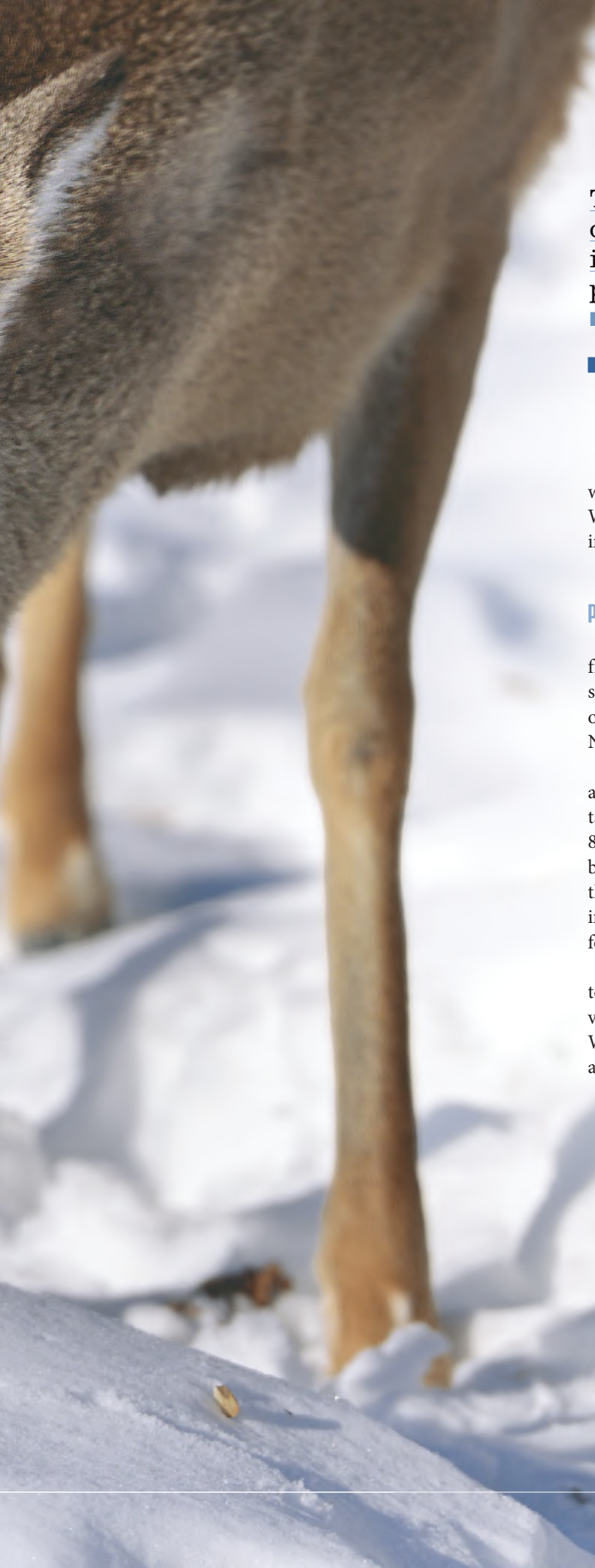
CONCLUSION

Burning is simply beneficial. Think about your budget, property and what you want to achieve, and start creating a plan. Talk with friends who might have done a burn, and talk with consultants such as Holdbrooks at Next Level Consulting. Learn more about the process and benefits. When the first drip torches get things smoking — literally — you’ll be on the first steps to a new canvas.



SCOUT AFTER THE SEASON FOR THIS FALL'S BUCK





The post-season provides a golden opportunity to find sign and other information to put you in perfect position on a buck next fall.

■ by Gerald Almy

The tall-tined 8-point burst out of the blackberry thicket like a launched rocket. In seconds, he was bounding across the property line, deep into my neighbor's land.

It was an impressive mature buck I had seen mid-way through the season, but I never put my sights on him. Was I crestfallen? Was the buck gone forever, perhaps hanging from my trigger-happy neighbor's meat pole?

Negative.

POST-SEASON INTEL

The hunting season had ended two weeks earlier. Far from losing my opportunity to harvest that buck, I knew I still had a chance. That would come during fall, since I was on a post-season scouting expedition that late-winter day. No bucks I bumped would be killed by another hunter.

I had also discovered a superb buck bedding spot — an attractive patch of cover with blowdowns, thick shrubs and tall warm-season grasses that would surely entice the tall 8-point buck in a day or two. If not, who knows? Maybe a bigger buck would use the area. By setting up a wi-fi camera there later, I would keep track of that. I had not seen a deer in that area or noticed the small clump of prime cover before that day. Now I had a good location on which to set up.

Deer are a lot like turkeys in that way. When an old boss tom is killed, another gobbler will usually take over his favorite strutting grounds. It's often that way for bucks, too. When an attractive patch of bedding cover becomes available, a buck will soon fill it.



■ Rubs are one of the most useful types of sign you can find during post-season scouting trips.

Far from avoiding spooking mature deer, my goal that day after the season was to discover secret hideouts for bedding or escape cover. And if that meant kicking deer out (temporarily), so be it.

Instead of sneaking along, I walked at a normal pace — something like hunting grouse. I would pause and maybe even throw out a sharp “hey” occasionally to see if a buck was hunkered down in a prime-looking area.

Then if I located a buck or fresh sign, I’d mark the location as a spot worth hunting that fall. If not, I would note the place as a location that might need a bit more habitat work.

Flushing out the 8-point was an exciting way to start that day’s scouting effort. It was also a perfect example of why you should not save all your scouting for summer and early fall, like many hunters do. Mid-January through March can be a great time to hit the woods searching for deer and the sign they leave while simultaneously forging a hunting plan for fall.

Focus on sign, but also try to uncover a deer’s travel patterns. Studying terrain features and vegetation without distracting summer leaves will help, along with topo photos and reconnaissance images from trail cameras.

I gained two main insights from bumping that tall 8-point. One was obvious: I knew where a mature deer’s daytime bedding lair was. The second revelation was

gained by reading the topography and thinned-out vegetation to decipher the animal’s likely travel pattern toward my

food plots. It’s far easier to do that when leaves aren’t clinging to every bush, shrub and tree, making it seem like you’re in a jungle.

During such searching efforts, also look for areas where doe family groups hang out. When you know that, you can predict likely buck routes traveling between those groups during the rut. Instead of going from point A to point B, older bucks will travel sinuous, swerving routes that follow thick vegetation, dips, gulleys, secondary ridges or creek borders to get from one doe group to another, valuing

safety over speed as they move. Those buck travel corridors will be killer stand locations during the rut.

Don’t just hypothesize where these travel patterns are, but actually find them by reading the terrain and vegetation in the thinned-out woods, and searching for sign that will help you confirm they are the paths deer currently use. Look for evidence such as rubs, scrapes, beds, trails, shed antlers, and primary and secondary staging areas. These will stand out more clearly in sparse late-winter vegetation.

The rest of this article will focus on those vital types of sign. Grab your topo map and aerial photographs, put on some hiking boots and hit the woods after the season for the best scouting sessions. After weeks of sitting stock-still on stand, it’s definitely fun to get up and move.

Sheds are a good place to start. Post-season scouting combines perfectly with searching for sheds, offering a bonus reward for days spent afield in January, February and March. Finding sheds tells you exactly where a buck was standing, letting you step back and pinpoint the travel route he was likely taking from feeding sites to bedding cover. It also provides vital data for knowing which bucks survived the hunting season.

You might learn that moving your stand just 100 yards over a ridge will put you in a major bed-to-feed transition corridor. Or you could discover a prime area for a November rut hunt in the soft terrain does favor.

FEEDING AREAS

Always try to keep the big picture in mind as you scout in late winter. Feeding areas will stand out clearly. Pinpoint food plots, corn, soybean, alfalfa and oat fields, as well as orchards and areas with large mast-bearing oaks. Look for fruit trees, shrubs and areas with transition foods such as honeysuckle, greenbrier, blackberry, grapes, persimmons and saplings, which deer browse on as they move between major feeding and bedding areas. These transition corridors are often prime stand locations.

Visit perennial food plots and search for fresh sign to see which ones are being used in the late season. Also note spots



■ Finding a shed antler is a nice reward and important info for making a hunting plan for fall.

PHOTOS BY GERALD ALMY

PHOTO CREDIT GERALD ALMY

where you could establish a plot to aid deer nutrition while improving your hunting prospects. Small ambush plots established along routes between bedding and major feeding areas are often terrific stand sites.

You might know where the major food plots are or possibly planted them yourself. But also be on the lookout for remote hidden openings where you could do a bit of brush clearing and put in a perfect mini plot where you might intercept a buck earlier in the afternoon as he travels towards major evening feeding sites.

TRAILS AND SHADOW TRAILS

Trails are easier to see after leaves have fallen and deer have walked on them through fall and winter. Look for critical areas where spokes of light trails branch out from major routes as the animals approach feeding sites or spread out as they head back toward bedding cover.

Also look for thinly outlined shadow trails in thicker cover, where mature bucks often travel paralleling the major trails used by does and young bucks. These are typically 30 to 80 yards to the side of main trails. Those light trails, often just a few scuffed leaves, are prime spots to waylay a wary, older-age buck.

STAGING AREAS AND MICRO STAGING AREAS

Staging areas will stand out clearly during late winter post-season outings. These are food plot or field borders where deer hang out in woods or thick cover just before dark to socialize and make sure the field or plot is safe before entering it.

Even more important are what I call micro staging areas. These are small patches of thick cover or jags in the terrain farther back toward bedding areas, where mature bucks often hang out before joining the rest of the herd and entering the open feeding area. These micro or secondary staging areas are top spots for ambushing older bucks that might not even approach the major staging area, let alone fields and food plots, until after dark. If you find one farther back along the route from daytime bedding cover to evening feeding destinations, you've located a great potential stand site.

RUBS

Rubs are easier to spot during the post-season than in summer or early autumn because leaves are gone, increasing visibility. But don't just look for any blaze on a tree trunk.

I focus on several types of rubs during post-season scouting trips. The first is a trail rub, or route rub. Pinpoint one rub, and then search for others nearby. If you find one a short distance away and then another in the same direction, you've pinpointed a travel rub. Follow these and they might pinpoint a feed-to-bed route that would be good for an early season stand.

Another possibility is that you've discovered a trail bucks use when trolling between different doe family groups during the rut. The surrounding terrain and vegetation will indicate which you've uncovered and when they'd be good stand locations — during early season bowhunts or as the rut kicks in.

A rut rub is a unique type of rub made exclusively during the heart of the breeding season. These are where bucks fight with, thrash and sometimes demolish small saplings, showing their prowess to a doe and nearby potential challenging bucks. Often, there's a circular pattern where a buck trashed every small tree around him and raked up the leaves. These are great locations during peak breeding.

Also look for large boundary rubs made on trees 3 to 6 inches across early in fall as a dominant male marks his home turf to declare his presence to other bucks. Look for these rubs on wrist-sized trees or larger ones that indicate a mature buck is in the area.

SCRAPES

Also search for scrapes where deer have pawed away leaves and left scent to establish their presence to does and other bucks. Pay special attention to larger scrapes with licking branches above them.

Scrapes will be critical locations to focus on during fall as the rut approaches and right afterward during the post-rut. Deer don't visit these markings as much during peak breeding. Chances are good that bucks will refresh the scrapes you found next fall or create new ones in that vicinity.

ESCAPE AREAS

On a macro scale, search for escape cover. Look for dense vegetation, swampy areas, brushy benches or knolls, thickets and rugged elevated areas where most people won't venture. The best escape areas will also be a good hike in from the nearest road.

These will be prime spots on opening day and on weekends during gun seasons. Often you can predict the general area where you'll find them by studying aerial photographs ahead of time.

FUNNELS

Funnels are areas where a buck's movement is constricted through a narrow passage. Bucks use these because they offer good cover as they travel, or there's simply no other physical alternative. Funnels stand out well in winter. They include strips of woods between fields, brushy hollows, stream borders, saddles, overgrown fence rows, shallow river crossings or any other area that encourages deer to travel through a constricted channel.

Note on your topo, in a notebook, or on a drawing of the hunting property where you find these areas and fresh sign. Also record spots where you see animals, like I did in the opening anecdote.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

With this information compiled, you can sit back and analyze your findings. Pinpoint good blind sites or trees to hang a stand from. Then trim branches that might be in the way for a clear shot. The more of this work you can do after the season, the less you'll have to disturb the hunting area right before the opener.

During summer, you can do most of your scouting by using optics from long distances and placing a few wi-fi trail cameras, such as the ones Moultrie offers, in strategic locations. Just before archery season, make one last low-impact midday foray. Reconfirm findings from your post-season scouting expeditions, hang stands, and trim branches and brush again as needed.

Then sit back in an easy chair, pop a cold one and wait for the opener — confident and prepared.



CREATING A
**HAPPY
PLACE**

Whitetail Institute's Next Level Consulting program provides a helping hand for food plotters who hope to take their land management efforts to, well, the next level.

■ by Gordy Krahn

A rustic cabin on a pristine lake Up North. Or maybe it's a mountain retreat or seaside cottage. Heck, it could even be an annual Griswold-type family vacation (without all the drama). The common thread is that most everyone needs an escape — a place where they can take a deep breath, kick back and really relax — to enjoy time away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Their happy place. For those with a hunting inclination, the solution is likely a cabin on a chunk of wooded real estate that can serve double duty as a family getaway and a happy hunting ground — where they can dig deep to their hunting/gathering roots and improve the land for its human and wildlife inhabitants, to become a steward of that land. Ideally, to increase hunting opportunities there.

Michael Drummond's happy place is a cabin on 200 acres of prime hunting property near the small agricultural community of Axton, Virginia. Nestled on the North Carolina border and flanked by the Smith River, the Axton area is a slice of rural heaven — rolling farmland, forests and scenic countryside. If that isn't enough, it's also home to all sorts of huntable game, including white-tailed deer, black bears, wild turkeys, waterfowl, assorted predators and various other critters and fowl.

During the 20-plus years Drummond and his family have owned the property, they have watched it transform from marginal to magical, a restoration that has taken a lot of forethought and hard work — and a helping hand or two. Early on, Drummond elicited the aid of land management professionals to guide him through the many stages of developing their fondly named Pinewoods — adding their expertise and fresh perspectives. And it's an impressive list: Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Deer Management Assistance Program personnel, high-profile private consultants, and Whitetail Institute's Next Level Consulting team of wildlife biologists, agronomists and weed specialists.



■ During the past 20 seasons, the body weights of deer taken at Michael Drummond's Virginia property have increased by more than 20 percent.



■ Michael Drummond uses several Whitetail Institute products at his Virginia property, and the results have been evident.



Next Level Consulting professionals provide a virtual sounding board for land managers such as Drummond, who want to get the most from their properties. The consultants do this by developing sustainable solutions while building relationships with landowners who want to take their land management efforts to the next level — who view habitat management as a long-term, generational commitment — drawing on decades of experience to create habitat improvement strategies that enrich wildlife and support thriving ecosystems. These highly knowledgeable and experienced consultants are available to help hunters and land managers with all aspects of food plot development and habitat management. Services include an on-site visit and property tour, soil testing, comprehensive management planning, a planting schedule with instructions and hunting strategy recommendations. Land management enthusiasts can combine this service

with Whitetail Institute's extensive assortment of science-based products to grow food plots that provide nutrition for wildlife on their properties.

When we caught up with Drummond, he was on his way up to his property in Virginia from his home in North Carolina for a family (three generation of Drummonds) hunting weekend. Here's what he had to say about his land management efforts there and the help he's had along the way.

Whitetail Institute: Can you tell us about the land you manage and hunt in Virginia?

Drummond: "We started with 70 acres in 2003, and now we're up to 200 acres. When we started this 22 years ago, the hunting sucked. I was lucky if I killed one deer or even saw any deer during the year. Today, it's phenomenal. We have 25 acres of food plots on the 200 acres, and the food plots have had a very positive effect on the deer. Over the past 20 years or so, I've been tracking the body weights of [harvested] deer on the property and they've continually gotten bigger — up 20-plus percent from what they were just a number of years ago. Now it's a question of what you want to shoot, not if you're going to get the opportunity to shoot. I'm enrolled in Vir-



ginia's DMAP, and they consider our property to be a very successful operation. The biologist called me the other day and said, 'You know, last year, you didn't kill a deer that wasn't at least 4.5 years old — nobody does that.' Getting that kind of positive feedback is pretty cool."

WI: Talk about some of your management practices for this property.

Drummond: "We grow pine trees and plant lots of food plots for the benefit of the wildlife on our property. Our turkeys and deer are abundant, and we're drawing deer in from every property around us. As far as our land management efforts go, we work with the Department of Forestry in Virginia to develop the best forestry practices for the land. They identify the trees that don't produce mast and those that are not good for harvest, and then we go in and clean out all those trees that aren't good for anything — those that aren't providing nutrition for wildlife or aren't harvestable. So, I did that with 30 acres that's all in the hardwoods section of the property. Next year, I'll do a second pre-commercial thinning of the planted pine trees on 100 acres where they'll go in and thin out all the trees that weren't originally planted — just volunteer growth. We'll clear all that out, which will allow the other trees to really take off in growth. So, we manage the forest, we manage the food plots, all aspects of the land. It's a collaborative effort with the Forestry Department, the Wildlife DMAP Program and the Whitetail Institute Next Level Consulting program team."

WI: What role do food plots play in your property management? Talk about some of the Whitetail Institute products you use.

Drummond: "I am planting more than 10 percent — actually, close to 13 percent — of the land just for wildlife. I plant oats, clover, alfalfa, brassicas, turnips, peas — you name it, I plant it. I use every Whitetail Institute product there is. And I also plant some of the ones they're testing. And everything wildlife-wise benefits because of it, whether it's deer, turkeys, quail, foxes, coyotes — which I'd prefer not to have — and bears. The three primary species we target are bear, deer and turkey. In Virginia, one can't supplementally feed. So,

our food plots are all about making sure the deer and other wildlife are healthy, and that means providing a high-protein, nutritional diet that's highly palatable and highly digestible."

WI: Why did you elicit the help of Whitetail Institute and its Next Level Consulting program? Explain how the process has worked for you.

Drummond: "I've worked closely with Whitetail Institute Next Level Consultants. I was also one of the first people to use their Plot Perfection app and still use it today. [Whitetail Institute's Plot Perfection app is a dedicated food plot management and planning tool created for hunters and land managers to help plan, track and improve whitetail food plots. It's designed to replace the need for multiple separate apps by bundling critical food plot functions into one platform.] When Whitetail Institute first came out with it, I worked with them on some of the different aspects of it. So, [with Plot Perfection] they can look at my fields and come up with things that I might not have thought of. And I'll send them reports for all the soil tests (all in the app) and all that, and [when they came up here] we sat down and figured out what's next for this or that field. Like brassicas, for example. I can't do that every year, so I've got to change it out with something else. Once a year, we'll sit down and figure out what's the best combination [of plantings] for the upcoming year. Occasionally, I'll throw in corn or soybeans or something like that, but, yeah, I'm running strictly Whitetail Institute products in my food plots."

WI: What effect has this had on your property, the deer herd and your hunting?

Drummond: "The positive effect it's had on the overall growth of the deer on our land means we can be more selective. [One rule we have] is that if you're going to shoot a buck, you've got to have it mounted, which can run \$500 plus. If you're making that choice, that commitment, when you pull the trigger, one must be willing to mount his buck. And everybody's got a different view [of what a trophy buck is]. For me, I've killed a lot of bucks, so my standard is pretty high. I let a lot of bucks walk that somebody else might consider a trophy. But I don't try to

pigeonhole people into what a trophy is. A trophy is what a trophy is to that person. I tell them, please shoot all the does you want to shoot. I've got all the DMAP [doe] tags that you need. I strive for a balanced herd. We see a lot of bucks sparring, and we see a lot of rubs and scrapes. It's because we've got a healthy, balanced herd."

WI: Would you recommend the Next Level Consulting program to other food plot enthusiasts?

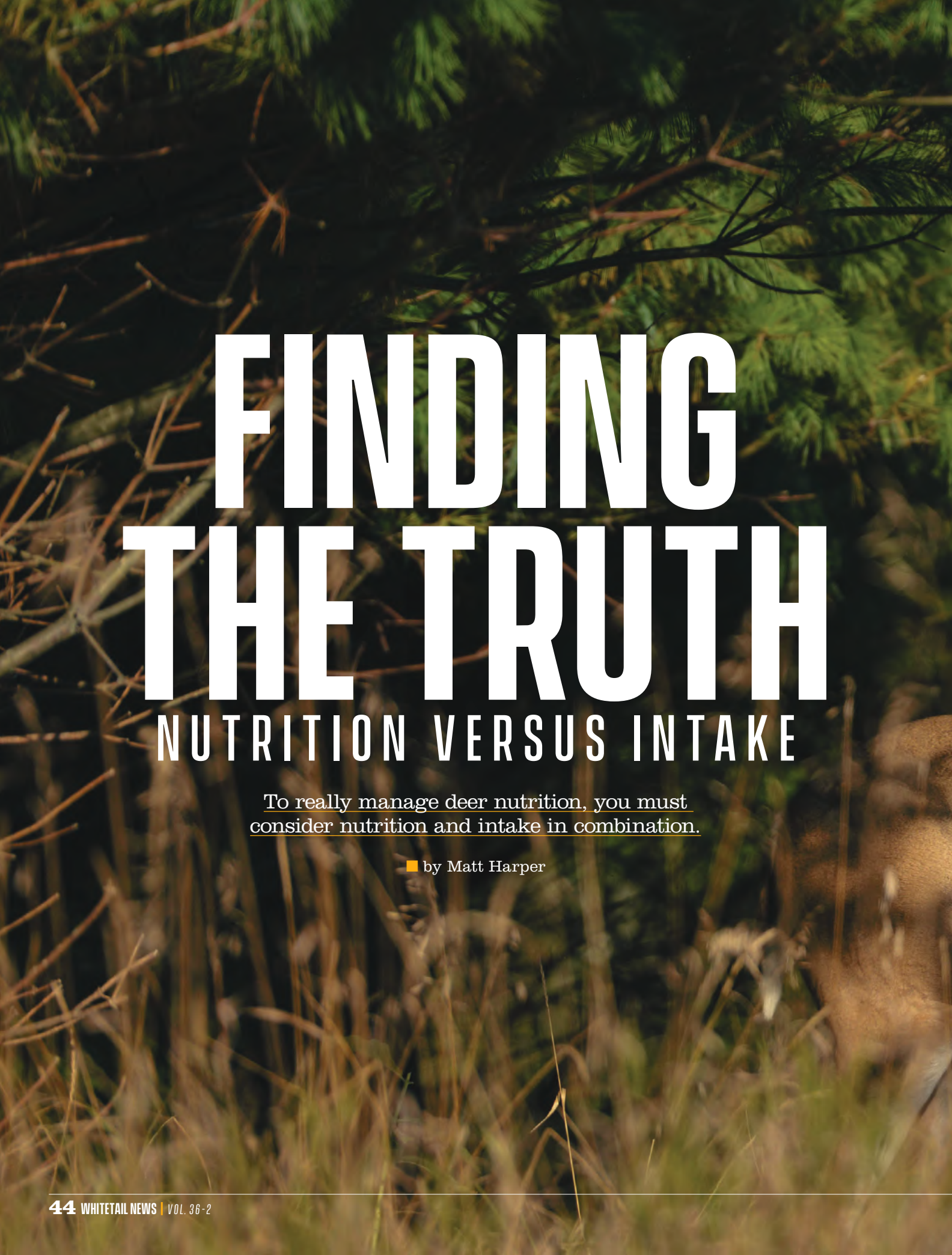
Drummond: "Did it improve my process, yes — and I'd highly recommend it. It gives you the opportunity to put a fresh set of eyes on what you're doing — and allows you to sit down with the industry experts and figure out what's the best combination [of plantings and other land management practices] for your property. It's an ongoing process, and they're always there, on call. I meet with them on a yearly basis. I buy a substantial number of products from Whitetail Institute, and I also do some test plots for them, so we have a close working relationship."

WI: What about your future goals for the property?

Drummond: "I'd say I'm pretty dadgum close with what I've got, but I continue to research, alter and improve things. When the Whitetail Institute group was at Pineewoods for the consulting visit, they looked at one of the bottom areas and said, 'There are no trees down there, just brush. Why don't you clear that out and add it to your food plot?' And I was like, yes. I brought in bulldozers and backhoes, and the next thing you know I had another half-acre to plant. One of my goals is to continue to increase the body weight of the deer on Pineewoods, and to continue to improve the property to make it the best it can possibly be. It's all an ongoing learning process and a collaborative effort."

For more information on Whitetail Institute Next Level Consulting and Whitetail Institute food plot products, visit www.whitetailinstitute.com





FINDING THE TRUTH

NUTRITION VERSUS INTAKE

To really manage deer nutrition, you must
consider nutrition and intake in combination.

■ by Matt Harper





■ Here's another piece of the puzzle: Deer must be attracted to and then eat the food in your plot.

Have you ever munched on cheese puffs and thought, “These things can’t be that bad for you.”

I’m not about to slam such a tasty treat. Surround me with bags of salty snacks and I can power-eat with the best of them. But although the hallowed cheese puff might seem light as a feather, it packs about 6.5 calories in each puff. Put about 50 of those bad boys down your gullet — which is about 50 grams and easily doable during the first half of a football game — and you tally about 325 calories. If you dipped them in ranch dressing, tack on maybe another 800 to 900 calories. For some perspective, compared to 50 cheese puffs minus the ranch, you would need to eat a little more than six heads of lettuce to get the same caloric content.

That’s an unfair comparison, because who would choose lettuce over cheese puffs? But let’s look at something on which we can agree: venison. There are about 85 calories in 50 grams of venison, but that quantity of venison also provides about 17 grams of protein. In comparison, 50 grams of cheese puffs provides only 5 grams of protein. The point? Nutrition and quantity are different, but you must look at the collective to get the real story.

NUTRITION

The shelves in the deer feed section of any hunting supply store are usually adorned with attention-grabbing imagery designed to make you envision what could be if

you purchased that bag of whatever. Whether it’s seed for food plots, deer

mineral, deer supplements or deer feed, you will undoubtedly see a claim about nutrition, touting some level of nutrients. Many bags will list protein levels, and some might mention minerals and even make a claim about energy. If you’ve read or listened to anything concerning deer nutrition, you’ve heard about those considerations and their importance. All are vital components of a deer’s diet, and they greatly affect the nutritional plane of a herd.

I’ll start with energy because it’s discussed the least yet is one of the most important parts of a deer’s diet. The body requires energy for everything, including muscle movement, digestion and growth — essentially all the biological functions of survival. In the monogastric world, to which humans belong, energy is a bit easier to understand. Take calories, for example. If you weigh a specific amount, you can determine a basal number of calories required to maintain that weight. The most common daily calorie requirement used is 2,000. Eat less and you lose weight. Eat more and you gain weight. It’s really that simple. However, if you add an activity that requires more energy, such as biking or running, the caloric requirement to maintain your weight increases. Although there are more complexities to energy nutrition than simply paying attention to calories, it’s still a fairly effective and easy system to follow. Ruminants, on

the other hand, tend to be more complex because of way they digest and use food. Deer are ruminants, so they have a stomach consisting for four parts or areas; reticulum, omasum, rumen and abomasum. The largest portion, the rumen, holds millions of microbes consisting mostly of bacteria but also fungi and protozoa. When a deer eats, the food travels into the rumen, where these “bugs” get to work, and the fermentation that occurs produces nutrients for the deer. When deer eat fibrous material such as plants or herbs, those are broken down via fermentation, and volatile fatty acids are produced, which is the deer’s main source of energy. The primary VFAs are acetic,

propionic and butyric, and although acetic is usually the most prominent, the VFA profile is determined by the specific microbial makeup.

For example, if you have a

higher-than-normal amount of gram-negative bacteria, more propionic acid is produced, and that is more energy rich than other VFAs. Deer have the ability to use fibrous material, being small ruminants, but they do not have the capacity to effectively use as wide a range of fiber quality like their large-ruminant brethren. Typically, the more mature and fibrous the plant, the less it can be digested by deer, which is why they are browsers, choosing to consume specific plants or part of plants. In other words, cows can produce energy (VFAs) from mature grass, where a deer cannot. Carbohydrates in the form of starch from grains and seeds are also an important energy source via VFA production in the rumen. In addition, oils and fats from seeds provide energy to deer as they are fermented in the rumen and fatty acids are produced. However, the amounts of oils and fats that can be effectively digested in the rumen are limited as compared to monogastric digestive systems.

Minerals are another important class of deer nutrients. They play a vital role in skeletal growth, metabolism, lactation and antler growth, and the practice of mineral supplementation has shown great results in deer, because most soils are lacking in one or more minerals. In terms of mineral supplements, the form or mineral compound used in that supplement is important, as usage varies depending on the compound.

Also, the level of mineral or percentage of the mix is critical, as you must have a sufficiently high concentration of that mineral for it to provide any benefit to the deer. Finally, minerals must be formulated at appropriate ratios, as improper ratios will negatively affect digestion and usage.

Of all the nutrients, protein receives the most press, so I won't spend much time talking about the importance of adequate protein. Most of the protein a deer uses is microbial protein, which is so named because it's derived from microbial fermentation in the rumen. Managers should always strive to maximize microbial protein, as deer need to be able to ferment the forage providing that protein source. So although the level of protein in a forage is important, the digestibility of that forage for deer is equally critical. A plant might have a high protein content, but if it's too fibrous for the small rumen to break down, the protein level is irrelevant. In livestock, especially monogastrics such as swine and poultry, nutritionists are less focused on protein levels but rather on the specific levels of the amino acids that make up protein. Lysine, methionine, threonine and tryptophan are some of the essential amino acids to which nutritionists pay specific attention when formulating diets. In ruminants, because so much of the protein comes from microbial protein, the level of amino acid balancing in formulation is less. However, dairy nutritionists use bypass amino acids, which bypass rumen degradation and can be digested in the small intestine. The level and use of this technology is getting more advanced in dairy and even beef, but for deer nutrition, we are not there yet.

INTAKE

How much a deer eats is rarely discussed. That is, of course, unless you consider advertising that states, "Deer eat it like its candy," or, "They dig a huge hole to eat it." Even if these claims were true, it doesn't address the question of how much the deer is actually eating. If I said I eat doughnuts every day, you might envision a middle-aged Iowa sumo wrestler. But if I added some clarity by saying I eat a fraction of a doughnut every day, that might change your mind concerning my physique. Let's say I eat an entire doughnut daily but had only salad the rest of the day. That would also change

the perspective. Or, maybe I eat a fraction of a doughnut every day but then two-dozen wings and a large pizza. The amount of specific foods you eat matters.

As a general rule, most animals eat about 3 percent of their body weight daily. That percentage can vary depending on circumstances, but regardless, it's a good baseline. That said, a 200-pound deer will consume about 6 pounds of food per day. So if you have a great food plot, should you expect a 200-pounder to eat 6 pounds out of your field every day? Or maybe you have a self-feeder filled with the best formulated deer food. Would that 200-pound deer eat 6 pounds of it every day? No, unless that deer has nothing else to eat. Deer are browsers, so they tend to wander from place to place, treating food sources more like a drive-through than a sit-down meal. Although a deer's digestive physiology can account for some of this eating habit, I also think there are other reasons. I cannot prove this because the only way to definitely know is to ask a deer. However, deer spend their lives eating, procreating and evading predators. If a deer stays in one place too long, even the least talented hunters, two-footed or four-footed, will eventually figure that out, which will end poorly for the deer. Deer are incredibly adaptable, and part of that attribute pertains to self-preservation. Not staying too long eating in the open is a pretty good way to stick around for the next sunrise.

NUTRITION AND INTAKE

To really manage deer nutrition, you must consider nutrition and intake not as separate factors but rather in combination. For example, let's say we're trying to provide a buck with a 16 percent protein diet, meaning that 16 percent of the total food that buck consumes daily is protein. If the natural browse the buck eats runs about 12 percent protein, you must provide something higher in protein to achieve the 16 percent target. If the buck consumes one-third of his diet in your plot and two-thirds on natural browse, you must have a food plot that is at least 24 percent protein to achieve the objective of 16 percent total protein. In reality, there's no way to realistically know how much of the food plot the buck is consuming, and for most of us, it's difficult to know what percentage of protein the natural

browse provides. The deer and the habitat in which they live are wild biological systems with infinite variables. Therefore, I tend to recommend shooting on the high side of protein for food plots, provided the goal for that plot is to provide supplemental protein. The second piece of the puzzle is that deer must be attracted to and then eat that food plot for you to get any benefit from the protein it provides.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention mineral supplements as they pertain to the relationship between nutrition and intake. Deer will absolutely be attracted to some deer mineral products and indeed dig a hole to get at them. Almost without exception, these are salt-based products. Often, they're almost all salt with a few other things added to make it look like it's not solely salt. In spring and summer, when forages are lush and growing, deer are attracted to salt because of the sodium it contains. But sodium alone does not provide all the mineral needs of a deer. They also need calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and a host of trace minerals, and as a collective, in larger amounts than sodium. So for a deer mineral to be nutritionally effective, it must contain enough salt for the deer to eat it but not to the level that it's the majority of what's being provided.

One other quick note to consider on mineral: Often, people say a cattle mineral is good enough for deer. A well-formulated cattle mineral is definitely better than a glorified salt lick, but remember that most cattle minerals are formulated based on the intake of cattle. Think about our rule of thumb of 3 percent bodyweight. I've shot some pretty big deer but nothing close to a 1,500-pound Angus cow.

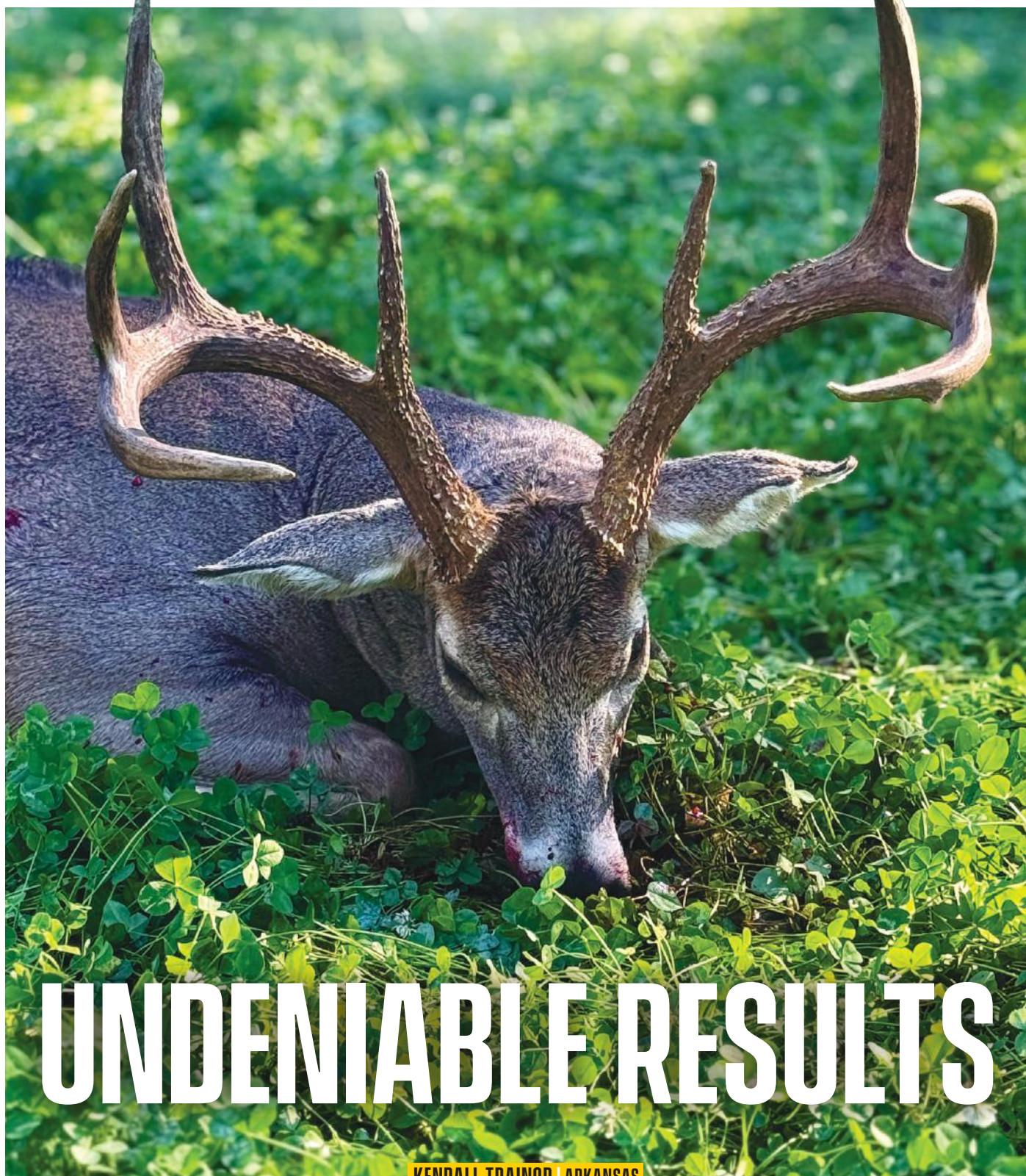
SUMMARY

As with almost all things, you must consider multiple factors if you want the total truth and best result. Nutritional profiles are important, but they are simply a number, and if it's the sole consideration, you might not end up where you wanted to go. Without question, intake must be considered when it comes to nutrition, because the best nutrition in the world is only beneficial if it's consumed.





MY TROPHY WHITETAILS



UNDENIABLE RESULTS

KENDALL TRINOR | ARKANSAS

■ The tonnage we have been able to provide across our clover plot has tripled since we started using Whitetail Imperial Clover. It's undeniable the difference in quality food and coverage since we switched.



MY TROPHY WHITETAILS



PHIL GUARINO | ILLINOIS

■ I've tried various Whitetail Institute products for different reasons. All worked great. Imperial Whitetail Clover is our favorite. Three generations using your products with excellent results.



JONATHAN FOY | WEST VIRGINIA

■ I started planting food plots on my farm in 2020. I have used and continue to use several products. I use Imperial Clover for my largest plot (2 acres) and usually two annuals at my other plots. I love the clover the best, along with the Tall Tine Tubers. I can't seem to plant enough of it, as they wipe it out so fast. I have tried and still use several others with success, but those are my favorites. The way I see it, y'all invented this industry, so who better to get the best products from, and I've never been disappointed. My family and I have harvested so many deer in the plots, but all the wildlife love them. Just this fall, my son and I were sitting in our blind in the clover plot and watched a coyote catch a mouse and eat it. Just a cool experience. The best memory was this past fall, as my 10-year-old son killed a nice 8-point buck out of a plot of Oats Plus that he and I put in together. I involve my children and wife in putting them in, and we love the process of planting them, watching the plants grow and watching the wildlife use them.



JOSH TRENARY | MARYLAND

■ Great products all around. I really love the clover. It seems to be the favorite on all our farms, but BowStand is a close second.

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

**PLEASE SCAN HERE AND
TAKE A QUICK SURVEY**

• <https://whitetailinstitute.com/field-tester-survey/>





FIRST DEER



KYLE CAFFERTY | VIRGINIA

PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF WITH A GREAT 8-POINTER

Going into the 2025 season, I had one goal: Getting my middle son, Colt, 14, his first white-tailed deer.

Colt has had multiple opportunities through the years at our 100-acre farm, known as Krazy Acres, on Virginia's Eastern Shore. He has encountered several nice bucks, but for one reason or another, things never came together. One hunt was ruined by a trespasser who walked across our food plot and spooked a buck. Another time, a buck was locked onto a doe and never came close enough to offer a shot.

We came close again in November 2023 during muzzleloader season. We were sitting in a stand we call the Gramps Stand, named after my late grandfather, Paul Hughes. The stand overlooks a Whitetail Institute food plot. An 8-point buck stepped out to the water hole for a drink. Colt got on him and squeezed the trigger. The buck reacted like it was hit hard, ran through the water hole and disappeared into the wood line, where we watched it lie down. We waited more than an hour until dark, and then searched that night and again the next morning, but we could not recover the deer.

In 2024, we hunted during muzzleloader season on Veterans Day. On the walk to the stand, we spotted a buck we call "Wonky" bedded down with a doe about 50 yards from our ac-

cess point. We believe Wonky might have been the buck Colt shot the year before. Colt had hit him on the right side, and in 2024, Wonky's left antler was deformed, and the deer carried a noticeable limp on his right side. We never saw Wonky that evening, but we had an encounter with another solid buck that entered the food plot. I suggested Colt consider taking the shot, but his mind was set on Wonky.

My other two children, Kenzie, 15, and Cooper "Coop-Dog," 13, have had great success on our family farm. Kenzie appeared in Whitetail News at age 9 for an 8-point buck she harvested in 2019. Cooper was later featured for a 9-point buck he took during the 2023 Virginia youth season. That same season, Kenzie followed up with a bruiser we named "Scar," because of a large scar running across his nose. After completing a European mount, we discovered Scar had a broken jaw and a broken eye socket that were in the process of healing.

With three highly competitive children — and all the smack talk that comes with siblings — it's easy to see why getting Colt his first buck became a priority.

Colt hunted hard with me throughout the 2025 season on our farm but didn't have much luck seeing a mature buck. He missed the youth weekend hunt because of a soccer tournament out of town. Other hunts were affected by unseasonably warm weather or uncooperative deer.

In December, we received an invite from my buddy Bobby Clarke to hunt his farm in Southampton County, Virginia. I hunted that evening with my daughter while Colt went out with Bobby. Bobby mentioned he had a spot where Colt might get an opportunity.

On the evening of Dec. 21, while sitting in a Redneck tower box blind overlooking a food plot, Colt pulled the trigger on an incredible 8-point buck. With Bobby's guidance and an H&R single-shot 20-gauge, Colt was finally on the board.

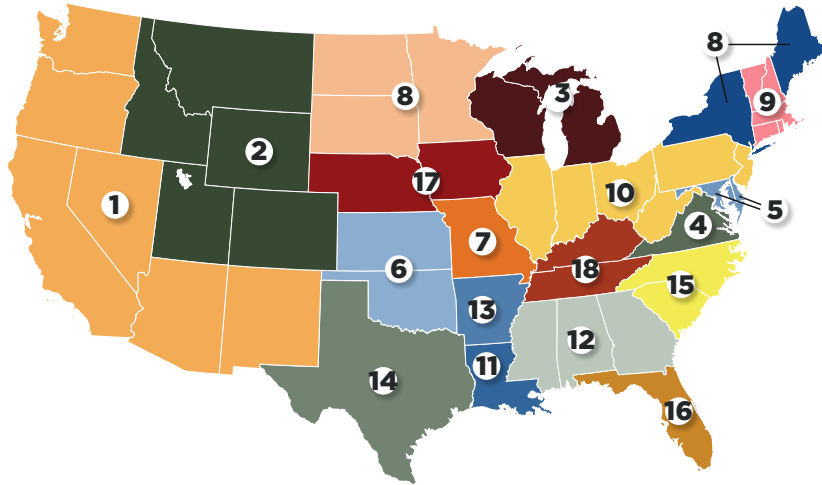
Although I wasn't there when it happened, my daughter and I heard the shot and knew deep down that his moment had finally arrived. Way to go, Colt.

We have been using Whitetail Institute products in our 5-acre food plot in Accomack County, Virginia, since 2018. Because the plot is close to the road, we planted eastern red cedars and loblolly pines for screening in 2017. Conceal provides additional coverage so passing cars don't spook deer and also adds height definition between the tree line and crops. We plant Tall Tines Tubers and Whitetail Oats Plus in fall to keep deer coming in through winter. Imperial Whitetail Clover serves as a year-round food source and is refreshed annually through frost seeding in January and February. This plot continues to be our go-to location for late-season hunts.

Thanks again for a great magazine and for supporting hunters who enjoy sharing their stories.

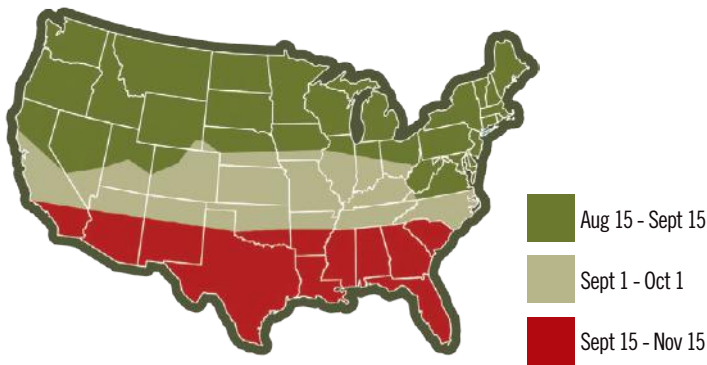


FOOD PLOT PLANTING DATES...



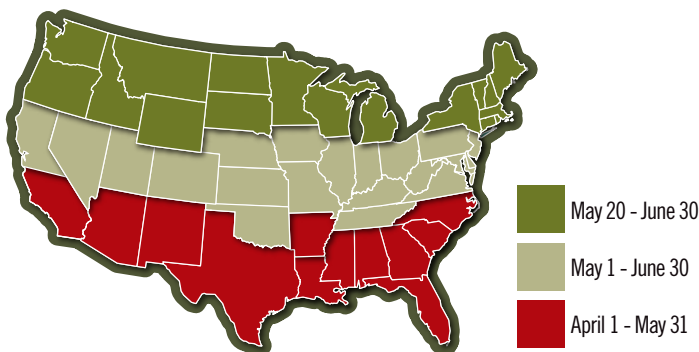
PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL CLOVER, ALFA-RACK PLUS, EXTREME, NO-PLOW, FUSION, CHIC MAGNET AND EDGE

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 8 Apr 1 - June 15
July 15 - Sept 5 | 16 North: Sept 25 - Nov 25
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 |
| 2 Apr 1 - July 1 | 9 Apr 1 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 17 Mar 1 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 |
| 3 Apr 15 - June 15
Aug 1 - Sept 1 | 10 Mar 20 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 18 Feb 1 - Apr 15
Aug 20 - Sept 30 |
| 4 Coastal: Feb 1 - Mar 15
Sept 1 - Oct 15
Southern Piedmont:
Feb 15 - Apr 1
Aug 15 - Oct 1
Mountain Valleys:
Mar 1 - Apr 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | |
| 5 Feb 1 - Apr 1
Aug 1 - Sept 30 | 12 Feb 5 - Mar 1
North: Sept 5 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | |
| 6 Feb 1 - Apr 15
Sept 1 - Nov 1 | 13 Feb 15 - Apr 1
Sept 1 - Oct 30 | |
| 7 North: Mar 15 - May 1
Aug 1 - Sept 15
South: Mar 1 - Apr 15
Aug 15 - Oct 15 | 14 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | |
| | 15 Feb 1 - Mar 1
Coastal: Sept 25 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Sept 1 - Oct 5
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 25 - Oct 15 | |



PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

Use the map above as a guideline for when to plant Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus in your area. For best results, wait to plant until excessively hot, droughty summer weather has passed. Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is highly cold-tolerant and designed to provide abundant forage from fall into spring in the southern U.S. and from fall into winter in colder climates.



PLANTING DATES FOR POWERPLANT, REVIVE, CONCEAL, SUNN HEMP, TURKEY SELECT, SORGHUM SELECT AND SUMMER SLAM

*Do not plant PowerPlant, Sunn Hemp or Conceal until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F. Wait as long as necessary for soil temperatures to reach a constant 65 degrees F before planting.

PLANTING DATES FOR GRUNT N GOBBLE, VISION, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND, AND DESTINATION

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 8 July 15 - Sept 5 | Mountain Valleys:
Aug 25 - Oct 15 |
| 2 Call for planting dates | 9 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 16 North: Sept 25 - Nov 25
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 |
| 3 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 10 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 17 Aug 1 - Sept 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Aug 15 - Oct 1
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | 18 Aug 20 - Sept 30 |
| 5 Aug 1 - Sept 30 | 12 North: Sept 5 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | |
| 6 Aug 15 - Nov 1 | 13 Sept 1 - Oct 30 | |
| 7 North: Aug 1 - Sept 30
South: Aug 15 - Oct 15 | 14 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | |
| | 15 Coastal: Sept 15 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Sept 1 - Oct 5 | |

PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS, BEETS & GREENS AND RAVISH RADISH

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 10 July 15 - Sept 15 | 16 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
Central: Sept 25 - Nov 15
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 |
| 2 Call for planting dates | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | 17 July 15 - Sept 1 |
| 3 July 1 - Sept 1 | 12 North: Sept 5 - Nov 1
Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | 18 Aug 1 - Sept 30 |
| 4 Coastal: Aug 15 - Sept 30
Southern Piedmont:
Aug 1 - Sept 15
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 13 North: Aug 15 - Oct 1
South: Sept 5 - Oct 15 | |
| 5 July 15 - Sept 15 | 14 North: Sept 5 - Oct 30
Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | |
| 6 Aug 1 - Oct 1 | 15 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 1
Piedmont:
Aug 15 - Sept 20
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 5 - Sept 15 | |
| 7 North: July 15 - Sept 15
South: Aug 1 - Oct 1 | | |
| 8 July 5 - Aug 20 | | |
| 9 July 1 - Aug 30 | | |



FOR THE LATEST PROMOTIONS, SALES AND NEWS VISIT [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WHITETAILINSTITUTE](https://www.facebook.com/whitetailinstitute)



DISCOUNT COUPONS

ORDER
TODAY!

SHIPPING INCLUDED IN PRICES

YOU SAVE \$29.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CLOVER

36 LBS. - 4.5-ACRE PLANTING

\$249.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$279.96
— (36 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Clover
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$42.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL EXTREME

33.6 LBS. - 1.5-ACRE PLANTING

\$198.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$241.94
— (33.6 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail EXTREME
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$20.03

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CONCEAL

28 LBS. - 1-ACRE PLANTING

SOLD OUT!
Call 1-800-688-3030 opt1 to pre-book for 2027

TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$43.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL FUSION

27.75 LBS. - 4.5-ACRE PLANTING

\$246.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$289.96
— (27.75 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Fusion
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$5.02

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL POWER PLANT

50 LBS. - 1.5-2-ACRE PLANTING

SOLD OUT!
Call 1-800-688-3030 opt1 to pre-book for 2027

TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$30.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL PURE ATTRACTION

39 LBS. - .75-ACRE PLANTING

\$89.97 + tax
Suggested Retail \$119.97
— (39 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Pure Attraction
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$29.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL WINTER-GREENS

24 LBS. - 4-ACRE PLANTING

\$189.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$219.96
— (24 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Winter-Greens
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$39.95

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL "CHIC" MAGNET

9 LBS. - 3-ACRE PLANTING

\$99.99 + tax
Suggested Retail \$139.94
— (9 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail "Chic" Magnet
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$34.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL TALL TINE TUBERS

24 LBS. - 4-ACRE PLANTING

\$164.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$199.96
— (24 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Tall Tine Tubers
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$10.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

45 LBS. - 1/2-ACRE PLANTING

\$69.00 + tax
Suggested Retail \$79.98
— (45 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail OATS Plus
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$42.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL ALFA-RACK PLUS

33 LBS. - 2.5-ACRE PLANTING

\$246.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$289.96
— (33 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Alfa-Rack Plus
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$30.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL NO-PLOW

40 LBS. - 2.25-ACRE PLANTING

\$119.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$149.98
— (40 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail No-Plow
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____



YOU SAVE \$40.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

SUMMER SLAM

31.5 LBS. - .75 ACRE PLANTING

SOLD OUT!
Call 1-800-688-3030 opt1 to pre-book for 2022

Imperial Whitetail Summer Slam

TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$16.05

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

KRAZE

\$42.96 (4) pak
Suggested Retail \$52.99
\$59.94 (6) pak
Suggested Retail \$75.99
+ tax
— (4) 5lb bags @ \$42.96
— (6) 5lb bags @ \$59.94
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$15.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

RAVISH RADISH

10 LBS. - 1-ACRE PLANTING

\$79.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$94.96
— (10 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Ravish Radish
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$6.03

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

APPLE OBSESSION

\$49.96 (4) pak
Suggested Retail \$52.99
\$69.96 (6) pak
Suggested Retail \$75.99
+ tax
— (4) 5lb bags @ \$49.96
— (6) 5lb bags @ \$69.96
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$7.06

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

DESTINATION

36 LBS. - 1-ACRE PLANTING

\$129.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$137.02
— (36 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Destination
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$20.02

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

IMPACT SOIL AMENDMENT

• 8.5LBS - .5 ACRES
• 25.5LBS - 1.5 ACRES

\$59.98 (8.5lbs)
Suggested Retail \$80.00
\$149.94 (25.5lbs)
Suggested Retail \$169.95
— (8.5lbs) of Impact \$59.98
— (25.5lbs) of Impact \$149.94
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$31.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

GRUNT N GOBBLE

40 LBS. - 1-ACRE PLANTING

\$114.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$145.96
— (40 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Grunt N Gobble
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$13.00

ARREST MAXX HERBICIDE

• 1 ACRE
• 4 ACRES

\$56.99 (1 Acre)
Suggested Retail \$69.99
\$159.96 (4 Acres)
Suggested Retail \$169.00
— pint(s) of Arrest Maxx Herbicide
— 1/2 gallon(s) of Arrest Maxx Herbicide
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$11.97

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

30-06 BLOCK

\$34.98 (one block)
Suggested Retail \$39.95
\$57.98 (two blocks)
Suggested Retail \$69.95
+ tax
— (2) -Pak blocks @ \$57.98
— (1) -Pak blocks @ \$34.98
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$39.02

SLAY MAXX HERBICIDE

• 4 OZ. - 1 ACRE
• 1 PINT - 4 ACRES

\$57.98 (4 oz.-1 acre)
Suggested Retail \$72.99
\$129.98 (1 pint-4 acres)
Suggested Retail \$169.00
— 4 oz. of Slay Maxx Herbicide
— pint(s) of Slay Maxx Herbicide
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)

\$ _____

SHIP TO: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____
(No PO Boxes, Cannot Ship to Canada)

City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Payment: ☐ Check or Money Order enclosed

Charge to: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Credit Card: _____ **Exp.** _____

Date: _____ **Sec.Code:** _____

Signature: _____

Whitetail Institute

MAIL TO: PO Box 399 Hope Hull, AL 36043

CALL TOLL FREE: 800-688-3030 • www.whitetailinstitute.com



BACK-40 NOTEBOOK

■ **Brian Lovett** ~ Whitetail News Senior Editor



ONE MORE TRIP AROUND THE SUN

Deer season still gets circled on the calendar, but the years have brought many changes.

When I was a teen, I never measured the passage of a year by my birthday. Instead, I marked the event during the firearms deer season.

That seems silly now, but it made perfect sense then. After all, for a Wisconsin kid, gun season was the biggest event of the year. Time seemed to drag before that first Saturday before Thanksgiving, which marked the annual opener. And the anticipation was electric. The night before the opener, friends and acquaintances got together, filling an old farmhouse with loud chatter and enthusiastic predictions. The next morning, everyone piled out into the chilling cold of the fields and woodlots. My “stand” was usually a rock or fence post, where I sat shivering for a few hours. The cold was tolerable, though, because I knew I’d see deer. Back then — the late 1970s — hunters didn’t sit stationary for long, preferring instead to engage in small pushes or full-scale drives, which really got deer moving. In hindsight, those were not great methods to shoot a big

buck, but they created action, which was perfect for my teenage attention span. By the end of the first day, several deer usually hung from the barn rafters. By the week’s end, more had joined them. And at the season’s conclusion, the gang held another gathering to process all the venison for the year. It seemed like the perfect finale for another year.

But times change, of course, even though my youthful head didn’t realize it. As high school and college passed, the annual gun hunt evolved. Farm country was replaced by the vast North Woods, and the days of seeing 30 deer opening morning vanished. Instead, I hoped to perhaps see a few during a day-long vigil, and if I was fortunate, maybe one of those would be a buck. Those hunts contrasted starkly to my first decade of gun seasons, but they were intriguing in their own way, and every camp still marked the passage of another campaign.

As life advanced, gun season morphed with it. Marriage, a house and a new career eventually made the big-woods hunts impractical, so the group — down

to just my father and me — settled into new hunting grounds in the central Wisconsin farmland. Gun seasons were enjoyable and productive, and we soon settled into a new routine that spanned almost two decades. But ultimately, more change arrived, and those comfortable days faded.

Nowadays, a fresh tradition has taken over. The excitement for opening day remains, and every Saturday before Thanksgiving still finds me in the woods — actually a small patch of timber my wife and I own. No longer do I hope to see 30 deer opening morning, nor do I steel myself for grueling sits in the big timber. And when the day is done, I usually just meander back to the cabin — often alone — to reminisce on the day and think about the next. It’s a lot different than boisterous gatherings of the ’70s, the spartan tent camps of the ’80s and ’90s, and the homely comfort of the central farmlands in the 2000s and 2010s. But it’s still deer season, and to me, it continues to represent the closure of another year. There’s more time now to sit on stand and think back to all of those opening weekends — 47 of them — and relive the good stuff. Sometimes, I shake my head with a chuckle. Other times, I wish I could return to those old haunts and experience them again, just for a moment. Often, I recall the deer; bucks we tagged and many that got away. Mostly, I think about the folks, many of whom have passed on.

Full disclosure: I no longer get too excited about the prospect of shooting a big buck during the opener. If it happens, great. If not, I’m fine with it. Deer season now is more about honoring the tradition and marking yet another year. Looking back, they were all good years worth remembering. And as long as that spirit persists, I’ll still greet opening day with enthusiasm and look forward to marking off one more trip around the sun.



RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS

**WE STARTED THE FOOD PLOT REVOLUTION
AND OVER 30 YEARS LATER, WE CONTINUE TO LEAD**



WHITETAIL INSTITUTE

Po Box 399, Hope Hull, AL 36043 • 800-688-3030 • www.whitetailinstitute.com

*Whitetail Institute's extensive research and development network includes deer hunters, universities, farmers and seed producers around the world allowing us to discover new and improved forages. Our research, development and testing is conducted within our system of Certified Research Stations and field testers across North America. This unique process lets us subject our forage blends to the harshest critics of all – Mother Nature, real hunters and wild, free-ranging deer all across North America.



**GO FURTHER.
STAY LONGER.**

The ultra-insulated, sub-200 pound basecamp that gives you Freedom to go wherever, whenever.

FIND THE RIGHT CAMPER FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP AT FREEDOMCAMPERS.COM

**THE BEST
HUNTING BLINDS
ON THE PLANET.**



OVER 100,000 BLINDS BUILT RIGHT HERE IN AMERICA.

VIEW OUR FULL LINE OF PREMIUM BLINDS AT WWW.REDNECKBLINDS.COM