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THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US

As we reflect on a year gone by, I want to take a moment to express our gratitude to you. Your passion for deer hunting, food plotting and habitat management has driven everything we do. Your dedication and love for land stewardship inspire us to keep innovating and providing resources to help you achieve your goals. Whether it's creating the perfect food plot, improving wildlife habitat or pursuing your passion for hunting, we are proud to be a part of your journey. Whether you've been with us for decades or are a more recent client, we truly value the opportunity to be a part of your outdoor experience. We understand the time you spend in the great outdoors is precious, and we are honored to help make those moments

even more memorable. Your support and enthusiasm inspire us daily, and we are excited to continue serving you with the highest-quality products and expert advice.

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connection to nature that brings peace and fulfillment.

Thank you for trusting us to be a part of your outdoor experiences. Together, we can continue to nurture the lands we love and ensure they thrive for future generations. Here's to many more successful seasons and cherished moments in the great outdoors. Your loyalty and trust mean the world to us, and we are eager to support you in all your adventures.

— William Cousins



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PERENNIAL BROADLEAF WEEDS IN FOOD PLOTS:

A MIGRAINE TRIGGER



■ Dog fennel is a tall broadleaf weed. In Southern regions with mild winters, it's a short-lived perennial. There are no selective herbicides that control it in food plots.

You won't find any magic bullets to control troublesome broadleaf weeds. It takes time and lots of planning to manage them.

Speaking with firsthand experience, anybody who suffers from migraine headaches quickly learns the factors that trigger that form of misery. I consider the presence of perennial broadleaf weeds in food plots to be a migraine trigger.

Full disclosure: No simple solutions exist for perennial broadleaf weeds in food plots. That is, there are no magic bullet herbicides that selectively control perennial broadleaf weeds in food plots. Management efforts are complicated, time-consuming, and disruptive. This

article features pictures of three common perennial broadleaf weeds that are troublesome in food plots: horsenettle, curly dock and dog fennel. Many other perennial broadleaf weeds can or perhaps should be included in this discussion, but those three species are commonly brought to our attention by customers. It will become clear that the complicated weed management efforts for perennial broadleaf weeds are basically the same among all species.

First, what makes a weed a perennial? Perennial weeds have robust root-

like structures that let individual plants survive from one year to the next. Some weeds perennate in Southern regions with mild winters, and the same species might not survive the colder conditions of Northern regions and live like annuals. The root-like structures that allow perennial weeds to survive from one year to the next are rhizomes, stolons or tubers. These root structures store carbohydrates that fuel re-establishment the next spring. Unfortunately, these root-like structures defy control efforts. Successful perennial weed control focuses on weakening and destroying the perennating root structures.

Perennial weeds also produce seeds, and the presence of dormant seeds in the soil cannot be ignored. Seeds produced by perennial weeds allow long-distance spread by normal dispersal means. Horsenettle is a good example recently brought to my attention by a customer. Horsenettle is a perennial broadleaf weed that has rhizomes and is also a prolific producer of yellow fruits that contain seeds. Although horsenettle is toxic to livestock and occasionally deer, wild birds are immune. Birds eat the weed fruits and disperse seed through their droppings. What does this mean? Assume that perennial broadleaf weeds have been suppressed in your food plot. The species might quickly re-infest the site from dormant seeds in the seed bank — much like how annual weeds appear. There is no rest for the weary; successful perennial weed management must be sustained and relentless.

Slay, Whitetail Institute's selective broadleaf herbicide, can effectively control many annual broadleaf weeds, but the herbicide generally does not control perennial broadleaf weeds. The same is true for other selective herbicides available for use in food plots. In the absence of an effective selective herbicide, successful perennial broadleaf weed management in food plots pivots to indirect forms of weed control. This is not a simple task, and it takes a significant managerial effort to plan and implement an integrated weed management system with minimal disruption to food plot use.

CULTURAL CONTROL OF PERENNIAL BROADLEAF WEEDS

One form of cultural weed control includes scheduling when food plots are established so there are fallow periods during summer before planting, allowing the use of non-selective systemic herbicides to control perennial broadleaf weeds without concern for crop injury. A fallow period is when no forage crops are growing, usually lasting eight to 10 weeks. Most food plot forage crops have a spring planting period and a late-summer planting period. Developing a food plot management plan built around planting forage crops late-summer creates a time-block earlier in summer, by which perennial weeds can be targeted with non-selective systemic herbicides. This is a crucial step in the management of perennial weeds in food plots.

CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL

By non-selective systemic herbicides, I'm referring to herbicides that generally kill all treated plants (non-selective) and readily move in the vascular system to the perennating root-like structures (systemic). The latter is an important attribute of an effective perennial broadleaf herbicide, because successful weed control depends on the herbicide reaching the perennating root-like structures that must be killed. The herbicides of choice for perennial broadleaf weed control in a fallow food plot are glyphosate, triclopyr or 2,4-D. To be clear, these are to be used in a fallow site with no forage crops present. Direct application to any forage will kill that crop.

Each of these herbicides are fairly inexpensive and can be found at any agricultural chemical dealer or purchased online. With reasonable caution, these herbicides have minimal soil activity and will not carry over in the soil, injuring later planted forages. Allow two to three weeks between spraying glyphosate, triclopyr or 2,4-D and planting. This buffer further reduces the small chance of crop injury from herbicide carryover in



■ Carolina horsenettle is a troublesome perennial broadleaf weed of cropland and pastures.



■ Curly dock is a troublesome perennial broadleaf weed. In Southern regions, it's primarily a cool-season perennial weed. It's present during early summer in Northern regions.



the soil and also allows the systemic herbicides to reach the perennating root system of treated weeds.

Stick with glyphosate, triclopyr and 2,4-D for fallow control of perennial broadleaf weeds. These herbicides can be applied alone, although combinations among the herbicides tend to be more effective for perennial broadleaf weed control compared to any of the three applied alone. There are many other herbicides that control perennial broadleaf weeds in non-cropland areas and forestry. However, most have significant soil residual properties that carry over in the soil for many months and kill future food plot forages. Additionally, these non-cropland and forestry herbicides present significant risk of off-target movement, perhaps killing desirable trees growing along the periphery through root uptake. If you have any doubt, contact Whitetail Institute.

MECHANICAL CONTROL OF PERENNIAL BROADLEAF WEEDS

Tillage with a disk harrow is a commonly used form of mechanical weed control. Perennial broadleaf weeds have robust rooting structures that resist control efforts. Repeated harrowing during the summer fallow period will weaken but not outright kill perennial broadleaf weeds. Yet repeated harrowing chops apart the root structures progressively, depleting the carbohydrate reserves as the pieces resprout. Weakened perennial

broadleaf weeds from repeated harrowing are more susceptible to later applied systemic herbicides. In fact,

I consider the combination of repeated fallow tillage followed by systemic herbicides to be synergistic compared to either tactic alone.

There are no simple solutions (silver bullet herbicides) to control perennial broadleaf weeds in food plots. The systems described to manage perennial broadleaf weeds are complicated, disruptive to food plot use and require a long-term plan. The distance between your home and hunting property greatly complicates implementing a perennial weed management plan. However, the complexity and inconvenience of perennial broadleaf weed control cannot be avoided because of the resilience of the pest and our limited herbicide choices in food plots. Farmers and ranchers deal with perennial broadleaf weeds every day and implement the same complicated integrated weed management systems. The one thing everybody needs to understand is it takes time and prior planning to successfully manage perennial broadleaf weeds in food plots, along with a commitment to fully implement the plan. It's relevant in this discussion to repeat the motto of the Boy Scouts: "Be prepared."

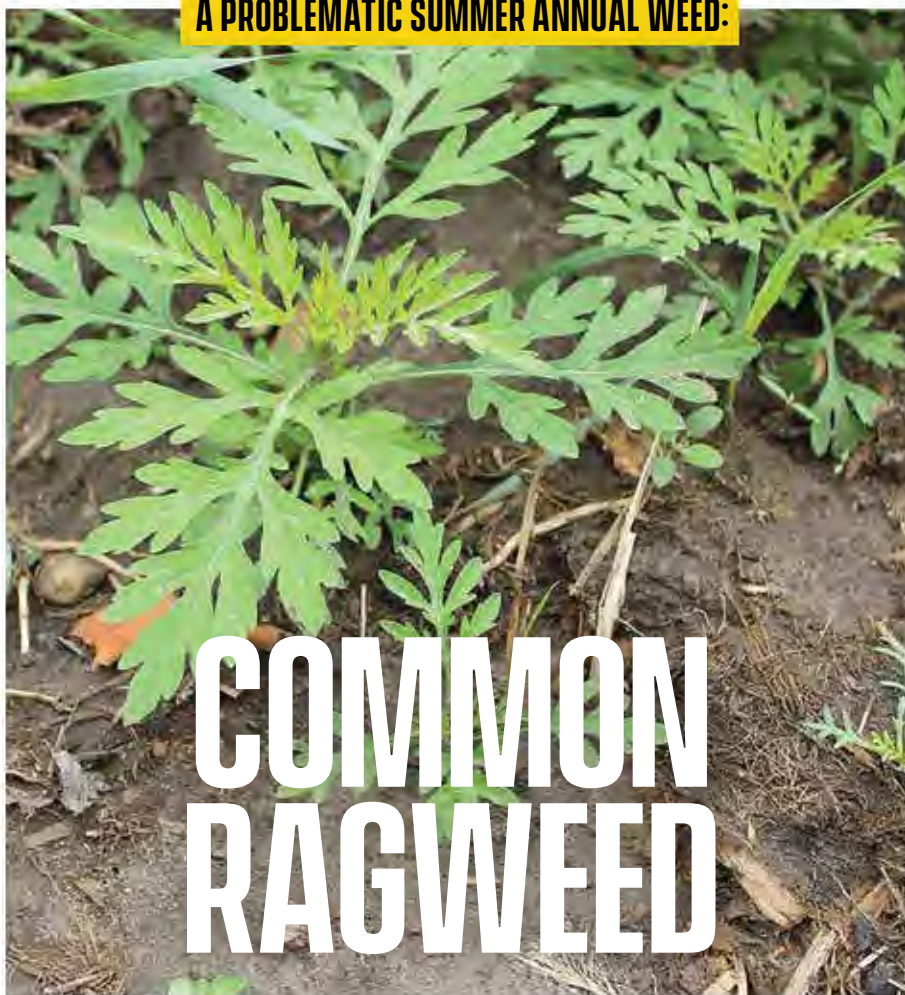


ADVANCED FOOD PLOTTING

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

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

A PROBLEMATIC SUMMER ANNUAL WEED:



This widespread weed can become troublesome because of its prolific seed production and aggressive nature. However, it can be controlled via many methods.

Common ragweed is one of those problematic weeds in food plots that's unsightly, and robs forages of water, sunlight and nutrients. However, it can be consumed by wildlife, particularly deer. It produces an abundance of seed, thrives in low-fertility soils and survives in many environments, which makes it a troublesome weed for food plotters.

INTRODUCTION

Common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) is a summer annual herbaceous plant with fern-like leaves in the Asteraceae family. It's native to North America

and is found throughout the continental United States. Common ragweed is found in cultivated fields, roadsides, river banks, open fields and vacant lots. The plant produces abundant pollen, which is the primary cause of hay fever.

IDENTIFICATION

Common ragweed grows as tall as 3 to 6 feet and branches frequently when population densities are low. It has a shallow taproot that produces a fibrous root system. It has compound leaves that are deeply cut into several lobes and are usually much wider at the base than the tip. The

leaves are 6 inches. Mature leaves are relatively hairless, but small emerging leaves often have hairs on their undersides. In some biotypes, they remain hairy throughout the growing season.

Common ragweed has male and female flowers on the same plant and therefore can self- or cross-pollinate via wind. The male heads droop, but the female heads are in the axils of the upper leaves and bases of the leaves. Each flower is about 1/8 inch long, and the males produce small yellow pollen that is easily carried by the wind. Plants usually release pollen in late summer or early fall, and each plant can produce more than 1 billion pollen grains, which is why hay fever is such a problem with common ragweed.

GERMINATION

Common ragweed is a prolific seed producer, and each plant can produce up to 60,000 seeds. Research has proven that common ragweed seeds can remain dormant in the soil for more than 40 years and germinate and produce viable plants. Viability was 85 percent after 20 years of burial. In shorter experiments covering two to three years, the annual seed mortality rate was 7 and 12 percent, respectively. Temperature is believed to be the most important factor that regulates germination. Emergence time significantly affects biomass, pollen and seed production. Common ragweed seeds are dormant when they are shed in autumn. They require a stratification period of 41 degrees for several weeks to release dormancy. The length of the stratification period affects the minimum temperature at which seed will germinate. Common ragweed biotypes respond differently to day lengths and temperatures depending on their latitude. Seed in northern latitudes tends to germinate and emerge earlier than those in southern latitudes. Ragweed seeds that emerge earlier in the season will produce up to three times the seed and biomass as those that emerge and germinate later in summer. If young ragweed plants can develop without intra- and interspecific competition, their shoot dry biomass, and pollen and seed production are much higher. However, the emergence time also influ-

ences biomass production. Besides these, temperature, light, humidity, CO2 concentration and rhythm of temperature change also significantly affect germination. Nonetheless, it's presumed that humans are the leading cause of the rapid spreading of ragweed. Soil disturbance and plant production contribute essentially to the ragweed invasion. Because hot, dry summers can cause secondary seed dormancy, field emergence does not occur during those conditions. Common ragweed is killed by frost. It's extremely tolerant of a range of soil textures and conditions, and is tolerant of poor drainage and extreme soil compaction. It's highly tolerant of infertile soils that are lacking in soil nutrients.

CONTROL OF COMMON RAGWEED

Tillage: Using tillage to bury seed has a positive effect on preventing common ragweed from germinating. According to research studies by Guillemain and Chauvel, the maximum emergence depth is 3 inches. Common ragweed seeds sown in 0 to 1.5 inches of soil depth germinated in 75 percent of cases, and seeds buried in 2 centimeters of soil depth germinated in only 2.5 to 0.5 percent of cases.

Chemical: Common ragweed is a prolific seed producer and a competitor of nutrients, water, and sunlight with forage plants. When established, it can be very difficult to manage. However, Slay is effective on common ragweed if applied correctly. Common ragweed needs to be no larger than 2 inches when applying Slay at the rate of 4 fluid ounces per acre. You must include a crop oil such as Sure Fire.

Cultural control: Research conducted on red clover in Michigan determined that common ragweed biomass production was significantly reduced when red clover was frost seeded. A study conducted in 2000 found that resource competition — an interaction between plants that both require a resource in limited supply, such as food, water or nutrients — between germinating ragweed and clover seedlings is the most likely mechanism of common ragweed suppression.



Mechanical control: Mowing can be an effective means of exhausting and depleting common ragweed reserves, thus reducing seed production. Mowing should be done as close to the ground as possible. If seedheads have already been produced because the common ragweed is mature, mowing plants will likely disperse seed. Therefore, it's not recommended in such cases.

ATTRIBUTES OF COMMON RAGWEED

Common ragweed grows 3 to 6 feet tall, providing cover for wildlife. The crude protein level of common ragweed is about 18 percent, and with the prolific seed production, it will re-seed every year. However, it's not very palatable to deer unless other food sources are not available. Therefore, if food plots are nearby, deer will be attracted to those forages rather than ragweed if they are given a choice. Research studies revealed that deer will selectively feed on rag-

weed when other food sources are scarce.

Because of its high seed production, if you choose not to control common ragweed, it will quickly establish and become problematic, replenishing the seed bank. It's an aggressive competitor with other plants and produces toxins that inhibit growth of crops.

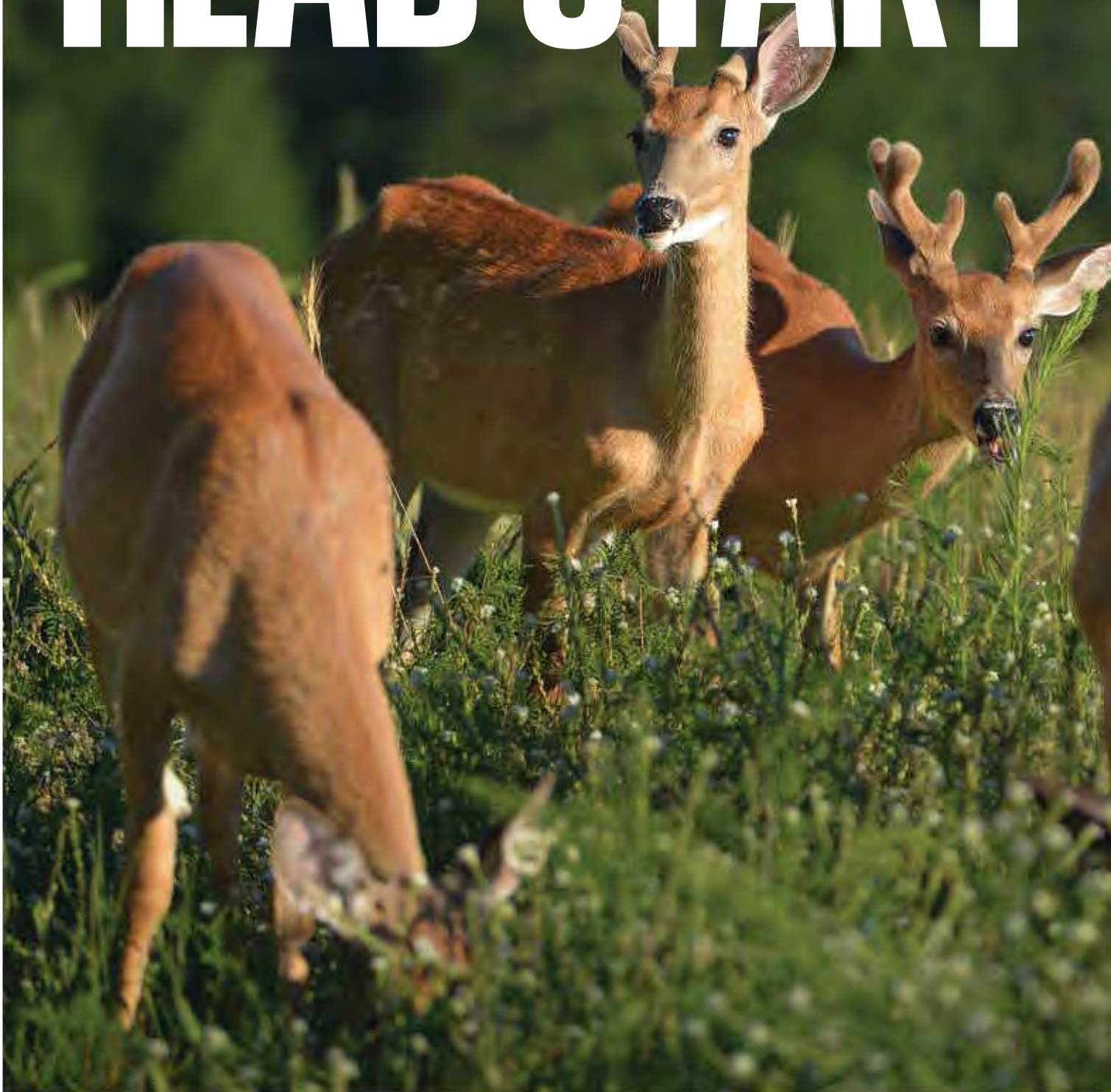
SUMMARY

Common ragweed can easily become troublesome because of its prolific seed production and aggressive nature. However, it can be controlled by tillage, chemical, cultural and mechanical methods. It's important to identify common ragweed early in the season and deal with it early so it does not become a problem when there are fewer options for control.



THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY SPRING NUTRITION

HEAD START





You can't control what nature might bring. That's why providing deer with a nutritional boost can be critical.

■ by **Matt Harper**

A couple of years ago, I was driving from California's Central Valley to Lake Tahoe. Leaving 80-degree temps in the valley, I wound up in the Sierra Nevada, driving through ever-thickening snow flurries. Then, through the drifting flakes, I saw a historical marker. To the drivers' frustration behind me, I slowed down just long enough to see it marked Donner Pass.

I've seen movies and read books describing the horrors of that ill-fated trip west, and I was a little aggravated with myself not knowing I was on that infamous trail, but there it was. There's a good chance you've heard of the Donner Party and Donner Pass. It's not necessarily just the harrowing experience the westward travelers experienced that might ring a bell. Rather, it's likely the measures that some of those poor people reportedly took to survive, deciding on an action so taboo it's looked upon with vomituous disdain. According to survivors and rescuers, some folks faced with starvation decided to use the only food source available — their own deceased. I don't know what it's like to be in a condition to make such a decision, but undoubtedly, they believed it was their only option for survival.

I apologize for beginning this article with such a weighty, gruesome analogy, especially for an enjoyable topic. But I wanted you to get in the mindset of what it must be like to struggle through prolonged, grueling conditions, driving you to unthinkable means of survival. In areas of the country that don't stay green all winter, where food is scarce to nonexistent or covered with snow and ice, white-tailed deer fight that battle. They might not size each other up for which herd member could supply the choicest cuts, but they are desperate to find life-sustaining food.



WINTER

In the mid- to north-
ern regions whitetails call

home, where snow and ice is a likely companion for several weeks if not months, winter-kill can be real. Several reasons contribute to this, but the main cause is lack of nutrition. Deer might not always die directly because of starvation, but also through weakness caused by an inadequate food supply, which opens the door to predation and disease. When the weather turns cold, deer cannot run to the grocery store to restock the pantry. When winter hits, whatever food was produced in spring, summer, and fall is all they have, and when that's gone, there is no more. An Iowa cornfield that provided carbohydrates for several weeks has been combined, and when deer and every other critter have picked through the detritus, it becomes several acres of barren wasteland. Soft mast is eaten quickly, hard mast is vacuumed up or covered, green lush browse is dried up and blown away, and hay fields are brown carpets. Even dried leaves and woody browse might be in short supply. That's the situation deer encounter each time a new year begins. I've often stood in my warm, cozy house and peered out the window at the frozen white landscape of the farm and wondered how any deer could make it until spring. Thankfully, deer are incredibly hardy creatures and have survived for thousands of years (some say millions) and, therefore, thousands of winters. They begin by storing fat reserves in summer and fall before Jack Frost comes calling. Using that fat storage is one survival mechanism. But also, a deer's

metabolism slows into a pseudo-hibernation state. Deer do not crawl into a cave or hole to sleep for several weeks, but their digestive system slows down, resulting in lower food intake, presumably an adaptive means of cold-weather survival. Interestingly, even captive deer that have as much food as they want decrease their daily intakes in winter.

Survival traits aside, winter is still a damn rough time for deer — particularly young deer and mature bucks. Shoot a doe in the early winter, and you will likely find a nice layer of fat that she has built up for leaner times. Bucks — especially mature bucks — are a different matter.

A buck harvested in early to mid-fall, before the rut begins, will have similar fat reserves as their female counterparts. Shoot a buck post-rut and your skinning knife will puncture skin and hit bone, the fat layer having been exhausted in the buck's frenzied attempt to perpetuate his genetic line. Post-rut bucks resume thinking mostly with their stomachs and search for any way to rebuild their body condition before heading into winter. Depending on food availability or the lack thereof post-rut, mature bucks can suffer greatly during this time. A fawn's first winter is likewise difficult, not because of rut but because of their immature size and physical limitations, which can cause threatening situations for simple locomotion and avoiding predators. That's why mature bucks and fawns are the most likely to succumb to cold weather's onslaught.

You might think, "Why am I not seeing dead deer all over come spring melt?" First, you might see that in some places during some years. A hard winter preceded by a summer of drought can cause significant winter kill. But nature has a great way of cleaning up, and many of the carcasses might go unnoticed. Even if there's no major winter kill, negative conditions might be at play and not nearly as noticeable as skeletal remains. Consider what's happening physiologically in the deer herd during late winter and early spring. Does are gestating, with the next year's fawn crops growing, or at least trying to grow. In early spring, does transition from their second to third trimester of pregnancy. During

the third trimester, most of the fetal growth occurs, which is a huge draw on the nutritional needs of a doe. Does coming out of winter in poor body condition are far more likely to abort one or more fawns or have fawns with low birth weight. Low-birth-weight fawns are far less likely to survive the first few days after birth compared to fawns born at normal weights. Poor body condition, combined with a slow start to spring, can significantly decrease fawn recruitment and take a toll on the doe. Fawns coming out of a tough winter in poor condition continue to struggle to make it to their first birthday. They are also trying to grow, not just maintain their body, and a prolonged spring green-up can lead to stunted growth, which has a significant effect on their adult physical characteristics. Bucks are also just trying to make it through to spring, and they're starting to sport new antler buds, the foundation for that year's trophy head adornment. A buck must first regain body condition before the optimal amount of nutrients can be directed to antler growth. The worse the body condition and the later the spring green-up, the longer it takes to pour fuel to the antler-growing fire. That will absolutely lead to a set of hardened antlers that is not as good as what it could have been in better conditions.

MANAGING FOR EARLY SPRING NUTRITION

You can't control the weather. That seems like a dumb thing to say, as it's pretty obvious, but it doesn't stop many of us from trying to will the temperature gauge higher and force green to emerge. The best thing you can do is manage the situation as best as possible and ignore the weather.

We're talking about spring nutrition, but managing for that actually starts the previous summer, if not before. Your objective should be to provide as much food as possible, which is normally accomplished via good winter food plots. As mentioned, when plant and crop growth ceases, whatever food deer have at that time is what you will have until the next spring. Everyone has limitations they must deal with, such as the size and number of plots they can grow, and the equipment available. But generally, make the best plan you can with what you have. Using rough cow-

■ Getting deer to optimal condition quickly is always a winning strategy.

boy math, try to estimate the pounds of winter food supply a plot can produce, and then determine how many deer that will feed and for how long. It's rough, because if you have drought or flooding, your tonnage estimate can be off, and even though you have a general idea about the deer population on a property, it's not exact and never will be minus an 8-foot fence. But do what you can, and remember, you're only trying to supplement and help, not be the sole determiner behind winter food for deer.

In states where it's legal, you can also use a feed supplement throughout winter and into early spring. A good example is Whitetail Institute's 30-06 Thrive. Part of the well-known 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplement family, this product was designed for fall and winter to provide minerals and vitamins, and also fat-building energy for a deer's diet.

I've used Imperial Whitetail Clover for many years, and it continues to be a critical part of the food plot program on my farm. There are many reasons for

this. Imperial Whitetail Clover is the backbone of spring and summer nutrition, and in the case of winter nutrition, it assumes another role. You have probably heard that Imperial Clover is the only clover bred specifically for whitetail nutrition, containing the specific traits needed for attractiveness, nutrition and digestibility. But when talking about late winter and early spring, winter hardiness becomes extremely valuable. In my experience, Imperial Clover is one of the last plants to stay green as winter approaches, giving deer access to nutrition deep into fall and even winter. Imperial Clover will go dormant during the coldest parts of winter, but I've actually seen it stay green under the snow when snow fell before exceedingly cold temperatures. But most important, Imperial Clover seems to be one of the first things to green up in early spring. I raise hay, clover and alfalfa and my Imperial Clover will always green up several days before my hay fields. That might seem like a small thing, but to a deer, beat up and

punished for the previous few months, it's like warm chili on a cold, wet night.


CONCLUSION

If I had been around 180 years ago, traveling west in search of my fortune, I'm guessing I would not have any better chance of making it than the next person. It's easy for you to say what should have been done and point out the mistakes when you have the privilege of hindsight. But it seems that the odds of success would increase dramatically if a trip was planned with ample supplies to match potential challenges. From a deer management perspective, there's similarly no way to control and predict all that nature might bring. But the more we can plan and prepare, the better the odds for a good outcome. A head start is far more valuable than what you might think, as it gets you where you're going faster. Getting deer to the optimal condition quicker will always be a winning strategy.




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**Food Plot Seeder
Model FPSB-6**



A young boy with light blue eyes and brown hair is the central figure. He is wearing a camouflage-patterned baseball cap and a dark, heavy jacket. He is holding a shotgun with a wooden stock and a black receiver. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with bare trees and a cloudy sky. The text "RECRUITMENT WARS" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

RECRUITMENT WARS



■ Many learn-to-hunt programs focus on children, but others are tailored to get adults into the outdoors.

Shoring up sagging hunter numbers has become an all-out effort and focused on more than just children.

■ by **Scott Bestul**

Emily Lehl did not grow up in a hunting family. Raised in the Chicago suburbs, Lehl wasn't necessarily anti-hunting, but she had her suspicions.

"I remember hearing about hunting and asking my mom, 'Why don't we eat deer?'" she said. "Mom made some comment about the meat being gamey or something. And of course, since I didn't know any hunters, it made it easy to be a little suspicious and not have the most positive view."

Two things changed Lehl's attitude.

"First, I took a class in conservation biology, and the weekly field trips took us out to natural areas, where I learned about the damage that an overpopulation of deer can have on native trees and vegetation, and that hunters can play an important role in controlling those populations," she said. "And I was like, 'Hmm?' And then I started dating a guy — who I ended up marrying — who was a hunter. He got me out there in the woods with him, and I'll never forget my first turkey hunt, which took me from mildly curious to totally hooked. And here I am, 14 years later, mentoring others who want to learn to hunt."

Lehl isn't just making new hunters on a casual basis. It's her job. She's an R3 (recruit, retain, reactivate) specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. R3 is a nationwide movement designed to boost declining numbers of hunters, trappers, anglers and shooting sports participants. The program has been adopted by many state game agencies, which, assisted by various partners in the conservation movement, are working hard to attract new sportsmen. Their work is critical, as declining license sales result in more financial strain on state agencies. It's also important because although public approval of hunting remains relatively stable (and largely positive), hunters constitute a shrinking percentage of the population, which could threaten that approval rating, as there will be fewer hunters to serve as ambassadors for the hunting and shooting sports.

Lehl's supervisor is Bob Nack, who heads the Wisconsin DNR's R3 efforts.

"We typically focus on young adults for many of our Learn to Hunt programs because they usually have the means to continue hunting on their own after attending a program," he said. "They're old enough to drive, and can buy a license and usually a gun or bow with their own money. So right off the bat, they've cleared several hurdles that a young hunter has difficulty getting over on their own. We absolutely need to keep working with youth, and we have partnerships with several groups who work with us to ignite an interest in young hunters and shooters early in their lives. But adults are just a little closer to the bull's-eye if your goal is creating a hunter who will stay with it for the rest of their lives."

NDA EFFORTS

Kip Adams, chief conservation officer for the National Deer Association's, couldn't agree more. "Hunter numbers are relatively stable right now, but we are definitely aging out, and those numbers will drop in the future," he said. "Youth recruitment programs are fantastic, but unfortunately, they're not moving the needle much. We need to focus on opportunities for more than white males who live in rural areas, and every hunter should make it a yearly goal to introduce a new hunter and mentor them for at least one season. And if that hunter doesn't look one bit like you, all the better."

Adams points to the NDA's Field to Fork program (deerassociation.com/meet-deer-hunters-of-r3-who-were-recruited-retained-and-reactivated/), which pairs mentors with new adult hunters for a weekend of education and actual hunting experience.

"We've done many Field to Fork events attended by women and hunters of color," Adams said. "Over 70 percent of surveyed Americans approve of hunting for meat,

and so many people like hunting and all that goes with it. They just need the opportunity and often some guidance to make it happen. The Wisconsin DNR and the Pennsylvania Game Commission both partner with the NDA to host Field to Fork events annually. Often, state agencies have the money to hire a person dedicated to hunter recruitment. They just have logistical hurdles of hosting an event, which is where the NDA comes in."

Adams encourages hunters to volunteer for Field to Fork and similar events, but also to just reach out to potential hunters on a personal level, even if official events don't exist locally.

As an example of how attendees of adult learn-to-hunt programs might be different than the folks in your hunting camp, Adams recalled a first-time lady hunter he mentored recently.

"She was successful in harvesting a doe, and of course, we celebrated with her and congratulated her on her achievement," he said. "But when we offered to take her photograph with the deer, she adamantly refused, because she thought it was disre-

spectful to the animal. So of course, we respected her wish. Then later, I always do a demonstration of processing venison, and I cut up her doe as an example while people watched. When I finished, she came up and lifted one of the backstraps and asked if we could take a picture of her with that. For many of these new hunters, harvesting and cooking wild game is a huge reason for their participation. Many care almost nothing for antlers or trophies, but procuring meat while enjoying nature is a big motivator."

PHILLY SUCCESS

Adams won't get any argument from Courtney Braunn, R3 Specialist for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Braunn has worked in the Keystone State's R3 program since 2019 and has been responsible for setting up learn-to-hunt programs in the John Heinz State Park, a 1,000-acre natural area in the heart of Philadelphia.

"My dad introduced me to hunting as a young girl, and I've gone on to hunt my entire life," she said. "But it's been super rewarding to set up these adult learn-to-hunt programs. Most of our hunters have

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not had the advantage of growing up in an outdoors family like I did, but they are really interested in learning, and almost all of them not only enjoy it but go on to hunt on their own."

Although Braunns said there are several learn-to-hunt programs that focus on other game, the most popular are crossbow hunts for deer.

"Participants spend the first day in an orientation where they learn about shooting and shot placement, regulations, proper gear, and then field-dressing and processing deer if they're successful," she said. "They also meet their mentors for the hunt. We started recruiting mentors from our pool of hunter education instructors, but once the word got out about the program, we grew in a hurry. Now there's a waiting list of mentors ready to join in and pass on their skills."

There's been a similar interest from rookie hunters eager to learn. Braunns has many examples of new hunters that got hooked on the sport, but one of her favorite examples is a mother/daughter team from Philadelphia.

"Jean is the mother and in her 70s," Braunns said. "Her daughter Nina is in her 50s, and the refuge manager at John Heinz knew them as regulars who fished there frequently. He approached them and told them about the learn-to-hunt program and thought it would be something they'd enjoy. So they applied, and I was lucky enough to mentor the daughter, Nina. She fell in love with it from the start and went on to kill the first deer tagged on state game lands in Philadelphia County."

It gets better, Braunns said.

"Both Nina and Jean kept participating in the mentored hunts as mentors and went on to start a women's group they called Pink Ladies Hunt, and they recruit other female hunters from the area," she said. "They've been very successful, and it's huge that they're from the city. Other new hunters can see them, know that they're from here and what they enjoy, and they think, 'Hey, I could do that, too.' And efforts like theirs continue to make our learn-to-hunt programs successful. We recently had a crossbow hunt where attendees killed 18 deer in two days, and

at least a third of those hunters were eager and ready to help cut up their deer. So the locavore movement is at least one way to attract new adult hunters."

CONCLUSION

Whether programs like these will truly stem the tide of declining hunter numbers remains to be seen, but they're certainly an excellent start. And everyone I've talked to, from attendees to mentors to program designers, can't praise their experience enough. If you're looking for adult learn-to-hunt programs in your area, contact your state game agency or the National Deer Association (deerassociation.com). Also, if you're interested in participating in learn-to-hunt programs for other species, the National Wild Turkey Federation (nwtf.org) and Pheasants Forever (pheasantsforever.org) also have long-standing and successful programs designed to teach turkey and small-game hunting.

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A person wearing a dark jacket and blue jeans is using a shovel to dig in the soil in a forest. The ground is reddish-brown and covered with pine needles. A blue bag of '30-06 IMPERIAL WHITETAIL MINERAL/VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT' is lying on the ground. The background shows many thin trees in a forest.

■ Mineral site location can be critical. The author has had the best success with sites just off of main deer travel trails.

MINERALS: THE COLD, HARD TRUTH

Don't buy into hype or crazy claims when considering mineral products. Deductive reasoning can help you avoid gimmicks and find products with a proven track record.

■ by **Matt Harper**

As I peck away on my laptop on a dreary, wet autumn day, I'm a bit sad I'm not in the woods, sitting 18 feet above the ground listening for soggy footfalls. But time and age have a way of molding you into a fair-weather hunter.

On the bright side, we're nearing the end of another exhausting political cycle, and soon I will not have to stomach the onslaught of campaign marketing. Regardless of whether you consider yourself an elephant or donkey, I think you would agree that political advertising has become stupid. One candidate calls the other a liar, and then in turn is accused of being a liar. After several months of that back and forth, the only conclusion is that the truth is as elusive as a 200-inch swamp buck.

I'm amazed at the influence marketing can have on intelligent people. Through the years, I've met some highly educated folks with IQs that would lap most of us, but they have bought into some far-fetched idea that a little research would prove false. I think the ability to believe something hook, line and sinker regardless of the outrageousness of the claim stems from the deep hope that what you're being told is true. If you have a deep desire for something and along comes a product that will help you fulfill your dreams, the reasoning section of your brain simply shuts down. After all, if the claim were completely true, how happy would that make you, so why ruin the dream with reason?

That's especially evident with some people I would talk to while working at hunting shows. "So, if I put out this mineral, I'm guaranteed to have big bucks?" "The guy at the other booth says his deer mineral is highly nutritious, and you can tell because they dig a big hole to get it." Those are just samples of what I encountered when discussing minerals at shows. Like any other topic, minerals have truths, truth stretching, misleading statements and downright lies. Let's share a few.

IF I PUT THIS OUT, I AM GUARANTEED TO HAVE BIG BUCKS

I wanted to start with this one because it's probably the most-asked question I've heard the past

■ Using mineral sites won't guarantee you a trophy buck, but it can provide a building block to produce the best genetic potential of bucks.

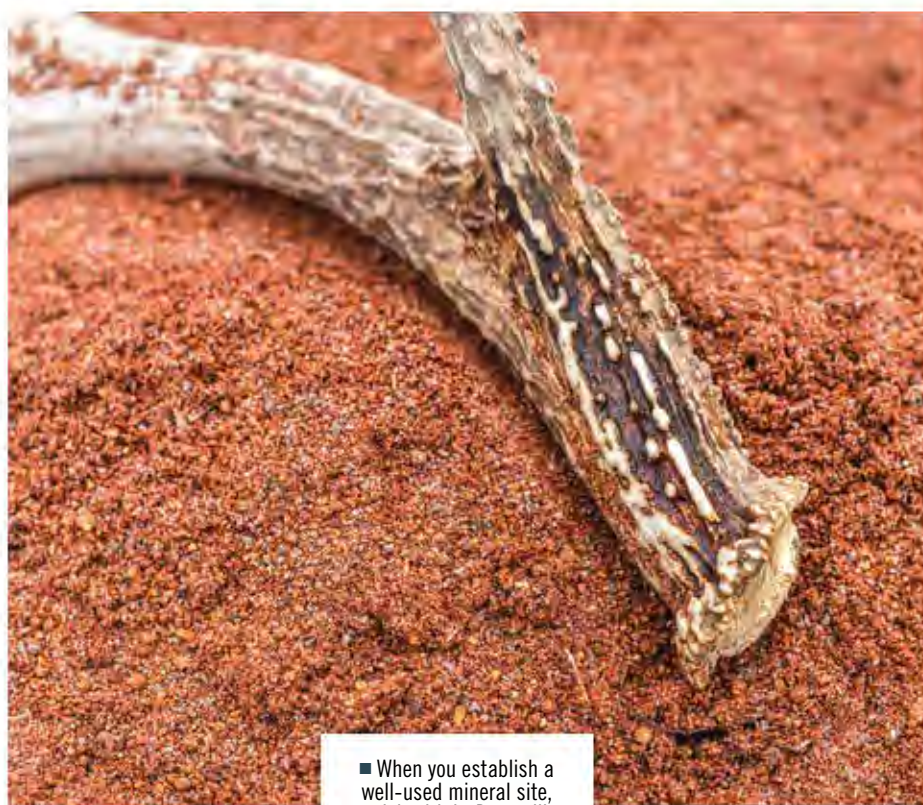
three decades. Honestly, who would blame someone for asking that, especially considering marketing that basically proclaims it on the packaging. Staring at a sleek, glossy bag adorned with the image of your dream buck, you can't help but believe a statement like, "A trophy of a lifetime in every bag," or some other nonsense. You think, "What if it really works?" so you throw a bag or two in the cart. There's nothing wrong with trying new things to accomplish an objective. I fall victim to pre-season shopping sprees to collect the newest gadgets and treasures. The critical element to understand is how a product might help you and how it won't help you. When someone asks, "If I put this out, am I guaranteed to have big bucks?" the critical word is guaranteed. As the saying goes, few things in life are guaranteed other than death and taxes. With the massive number of variabilities involved when hunting any trophy-class animal, there are few if any guarantees. Using a supplemental mineral on your property will in no way guarantee you a trophy buck, but it can provide one of the building blocks needed to produce the best genetic potential of the bucks. If it's a well-formulated, nutrient-rich mineral product (we will talk about this later), a mineral will supply a portion of the nutritive requirements needed for maximum phenotypic expression. In other words, you need optimal mineral levels in the diet to even have a chance of a buck becoming as big as his genetic makeup will allow.



Few will argue that science and research have not proven that mineral supplementation will improve the health and production of bucks, or even does and fawns. In the truest sense of qualified results, you must research wild whitetails and show the exact nutrient requirement for each mineral and vitamin to determine with 100 percent certainty the precise quantity of mineral needed in a buck's diet. Of course, that cannot happen with an uncontrolled wild population with no ability to remove variables. Still, you only have to look at research on other ruminants, small and large, that shows unequivocal benefits of mineral supplementation. All soils are deficient in at least a few minerals, meaning the diet of an animal will be deficient. That's true for grazing cattle, foraging sheep or browsing goats, all of which have research-proven documentation about the benefits of mineral supplementation on body growth, skeletal soundness, milk production, reproductive efficiency and immune system improvements. I have yet to see anyone prove why a deer would be different. Further, field data has shown improvements in all these areas, including antler growth and density, on deer harvested before and after a mineral supplementation program. But if you shoot immature bucks, even the best nutritional management will not help you to harvest the best deer your property can produce.

THE BAG SAYS IT HAS 30-PLUS MINERALS. SO IT MUST BE GOOD

In every far-reaching corner of society, someone claims something is the best. "My grandma's fried chicken is the best," or, "I have the best recipe for chili." We also watch press conferences after football games during which someone claims to be the best receiver or running back. The same holds true for deer mineral supplements when you consider the product label as legally bound documentation describing what and how much of each ingredient is in the product. You can actually compare products by their labels. There are several essentially non-nutritional substances you can pour on the ground and deer will dig a hole to consume it. That says nothing about whether it was good nutritionally. If I gave 10 people the choice between



■ When you establish a well-used mineral site, stick with it. Deer will become accustomed to it and use it year after year.

chocolate cake and raw Brussels sprouts, the cake would win the day.

The tag tells the real story, but the down side is it's sometimes difficult to interpret unless you're educated and trained in such matters. Simply having 30-plus minerals in a product doesn't mean it's good nutritionally. If copper or zinc are listed as being in the product, how much of each are actually there? Going back to the chocolate cake, you could say it contains eggs and milk, but it's mostly sugar and chocolate. Likewise, our 30-mineral product might be mostly salt, with only a minuscule amount of the other minerals and vitamins.

IF I USE IT, THEY WILL COME

How many times have you read a package stating something like, "Draw big bucks in for miles" or something similar? Next to guaranteeing big bucks, it's probably the most overblown claim on product packaging. Of course, a product must be attractive to deer, because without consumption, the best nutritionally fortified mineral/vitamin supplement will do you and the deer no good. With many deer minerals, salt is the critical ingredient for attracting whitetails. Green vegetation — especial-

ly young growing vegetation — is high in potassium but contains very little to no

sodium. Because the body needs sodium to balance the potassium levels being ingested, deer become hungry for salt to get the sodium portion of the compound sodium chloride. Just because you pour out some mineral containing salt doesn't mean a buck will abandon home and hearth 4 miles away to come in search for your magic potion. A buck's home range varies, but during the non-breeding periods, they stick to a relatively small geography that they know well and has kept them alive. Unless they are flushed by human intrusion, starving or cranked up with love sickness, bucks tend to be homebodies. Also, there are several natural forms of sodium that can be found in the wilds that form natural salt licks. The moral of the story? Don't expect to triple your buck population simply by putting out a mineral site. That said, research has shown that if a mineral site is in relative proximity of a deer's home range, bucks will return to that area to appease their craving. Some work shows fawns visiting a mineral site with their mother will remember that site as they get older and return to it as long as it is close to their home range at maturity.

The best practice is to create multiple mineral sites across your property, and if you know a buck's home range, have one in it. If you use the right product, the buck will be attracted to it.

JUST POUR THE STUFF ON THE GROUND

I like a good steakhouse as much as the next guy. But if the steakhouse is not convenient to access or in a place I would rather not go, I likely won't be a regular patron and will find another more suitable to my liking. A curiosity I've noticed with mineral sites is that deer seem to have an affinity for the location of mineral sites. I've created two mineral sites using the same product not more than 20 yards apart from each other and found that deer nail one of them yet completely ignore the other. I cannot scientifically prove the reasons for the uppy nature deer have toward mineral site location, but it certainly involves the site being where deer feel comfortable stopping to indulge.

I've had the best luck with sites that are

just off main trails, leading to a food plot or water, back in the cover a bit. I also think soil type plays a role in site preference. I've not had much luck in sandy soils but have had good success in loamy soil. Deer actually eat the dirt (hence the hole digging) to get the mineral, and sandy soils might leach the mineral too quickly. Or maybe deer don't like a mouth full of sand. Either way, there seems to be a definite preference. Just going out and pouring a bag on the ground will likely create disappointment. When starting sites, try small ones at multiple places, and then stick with ones being hit the hardest. When I have a well-used site, I stick with it for that area, as deer become accustomed to it and use it year after year.

CONCLUSION

I know people are probably getting sick of me saying this, but we live in a world controlled more by marketers than lawyers, or at least equally. That leads to a lot of confusion and disappointment,

especially if the product you're using involves a passion as great as deer hunting and deer management.

My advice is to pry back the hype and dig into a product as much as you can. Is the product something that has been scientifically developed and researched? And for me, most important, has it shown the results it claims, and not just once or twice but through multiple examples and years? When it comes to longevity of proven results, there's no other product that compares to the mineral lineup from Whitetail Institute. I'm not saying that because I'm writing in their magazine. It's the simple truth. No other product has produced as many results through as many years as Whitetail's mineral vitamin supplements. Sure, some other products are good, but they don't have Whitetail's track record, which is why Whitetail Institute mineral products are part of my management program every year.



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Warning: *These chores might not be fun. However, taking care of them now will pay off during deer season.*

■ by **Alan Clemons**

OFF-SEASON WORK THAT STINKS

With deer season finished, it's time to kick back, relax and not think about anything until late summer. Right? Wrong. Now is the time to get a bunch of those stinky chores done. Maybe you don't want to do them, but you need to.

Before spring arrives, and even until early summer, you can knock out the things you saw or thought about during the season. Perhaps a winter ice storm knocked down a lot of limbs or trees at your hunting areas. Or you were in a stand and thought about a shooting lane to cut, or what a great spot that looked like for a ground blind. Maybe

you realized the trail to and from your stand is helping deer pattern you, so it's time to create some more entry and exit points.

These don't have to be onerous chores. Definitely do the little things, such as replacing batteries in cameras, putting out new cameras, cleaning and storing your clothes, and going through your gear. The off-season is a good time to take stock of your backpack contents, if you use one, and replace anything old or stock up on new items.

In the field, it's time for sweat equity. Take your time and do these chores right. It'll pay off during the season.

REMOVING STANDS AND BLINDS

Removing climbing and ladder stands or ground blinds is a good idea so you can check everything to make sure it's good for next season. Note where the climbing or ladder stands were by marking the tree with a splotch of paint. It won't hurt the tree, and you'll know exactly which one you were in. Give all stands and blinds a good once-over to check for anything loose or rusty, and see if the zippers work or need lube.

TRIMMING SHOOTING LANES

If you have a favorite tree to climb or a ladder stand you don't move, keep shooting lanes clear by trimming them now. Break out a chainsaw, pole saw and loppers to keep existing lanes clear or to open new ones. They don't have to be wide. Your arrow or bullet doesn't need an interstate lane to get to the sweet spot on a deer. But by trimming shooting lanes, you'll greatly reduce the risk of hitting an errant limb.

TRIMMING WALKING PATHS

This is one of my go-to offseason

work tasks because it definitely can help later in the year. Whether you do this immediately after the season, in spring or later in summer, creating new entry and exit routes to your stands or other locations is a plus. I use a commercial-grade Stihl string-trimmer and head through the field or woods, taking everything to the dirt. Yes, some vegetation will grow back before the season if you do this early. But that's fine, as you'll have the main trails.

If you want to be uber-picky, use a leaf blower to clear debris and more easily identify the path. Then you can add reflective tacks on trees along the path and also cut any overhanging limbs. This reduces the chance of getting a face full of spider web in the pre-dawn walk. All this can make your entry and exit to stand locations quieter and faster.

LADDER STAND MAINTENANCE

Egad, all the stories about old ladder stands that collapse. Don't be one of those guys. Trees grow around the chains, straps and bars of stands, and

even the back of the stand sometimes, all of which can harm the stand's stability and strength. Every year, check connecting straps or support bars on ladder stands, especially if they're homemade versions with 2-by-4s or other wood. Replace anything if it's old. Check all the ladder steps, too, whether your stand is metal or homemade. I've seen homemade wooden ladders with missing steps because the board rotted from the nails but never was replaced.

This is one of the stinky off-season jobs best done with a friend, especially if you remove stands. Be sure to wear your safety harness when you're off the ground. If you're alone, let a loved one know your location. Be sure to have your phone charged and with you.

MARK THE LAND BOUNDARIES

Trespassing is a pain in the hind end. One of the best ways to make sure trespassers or poachers know they're on your land is by clearly marking the land boundaries and posting signs. Some states require one or both to be done. Check your state requirements about

PHOTO BY JASON SMY

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marking your property to let others know it's your land. In Alabama, for example, purple paint must be used in these ways to define boundary lines:

- Vertical lines must be at least 8 inches in length and at least 1 inch in width.

- Marks should be positioned with the bottom of the line no less than 3 feet from the ground and no more than 5 feet from the ground.

- Marks must be readily visible to anyone approaching the property. They should be spaced no more than 100 feet apart on forest land and no more than 1,000 feet apart on non-forest land.

Your state's laws or requirements might differ, so be sure to check. Metal or plastic no-trespassing signs are available at multiple big box stores and local hardware stores, too. Use both. Don't help the weasels who claim they didn't see anything because you didn't make the effort.

PICK AND CLEAN SITES FOR BLINDS

Ground blinds are great because you

can throw them up and hunt immediately, hunt a day later, or use them all season. One place I hunt has a nice view along a creek where deer move. A few years ago, I used my string trimmer and tree loppers to create a footprint for the blind. After trimming limbs and saplings, I cleared all that out and then put the string trimmer to use on the footprint. Then I used a leaf blower to clean the debris. Voila, a clean area for my ground blind. With a couple of paths to it, I can slip in quietly and watch the creek. This location is near a small pasture, too, where I know bucks have made scrapes before along the tree line. I can see the tree line, too, so it's a win-win situation.

REMOVING BEAVER DAMS

Talk about stinkin' work, eh? But sometimes it's necessary. Beavers are masterful engineers, creating swamps or low-water areas with their insanely cool dams. That's all great until it isn't, and your property becomes a small lake or swamp when you don't want that. If you can tear out a dam by hand, that's

hard work, but it can be effective. Watch for snakes, of course, and maybe have a buddy or two with you. If you have to use an explosive charge, be smart about it, and double-check your state laws about doing so. Beavers are persistent, too, so you might have to learn to trap or contact a trapper. Search for your state trapping association to find someone near you who might help.

If you don't want to get rid of the dam, that's sometimes not a bad idea, too. It might attract waterfowl and give you a new habit to take up in winter after deer season's finished.

CONCLUSION

These chores might not be especially fun. However, taking care of that stinky business during the off-season will put you in better position to succeed when the game is on.

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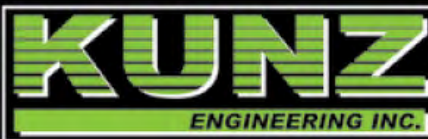
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■ Jody Holdbrooks, of Next Level Consulting, and weed specialist Dr. Joyce Tredaway discuss a food plot planted with Power Plant on the author's farm.

And why hiring a professional consultant might help you achieve your land management and whitetail hunting goals. ■ **Text and Photos by Bill Winke**

In addition to the places, I have walked while looking for new areas to hunt, I have walked at least 30 privately owned whitetail hunting properties in the past two years, all as part of my part-time consulting business.

But I wasn't just walking these properties. I was studying them, trying to really understand what made them tick or, in many cases, what kept them from ticking.

It's interesting to compare that many whitetail-focused properties in a brief period. The most common problems become obvious. But beyond those, there is almost always some other issue underlying the success of those places. That's what I want to get to in this article — not only the four most common issues I've seen but some of the finer issues that can make just as much difference in the end.

THE CONSULTING BUSINESS

I don't engage in consulting full-time, nor do I want to. My goal is to spend roughly one month per year doing this, so it's a limited effort. I visit about 15 properties per year and probably will not increase that number in the future. That's the main reason I've teamed up with Whitetail Institute's Next Level consulting team.

This new relationship gives me a chance to impact more properties than I can visit each year. I do this by supporting the Next Level team with pre-visit goal setting and their final assessments and plans. I can also help them solve tough issues — especially in the Midwest, the area I know best.

So, although I might never visit more than 15 sites per year, I hope to affect a lot more positive change by supporting Jody Holdbrooks and his team at Next Level. That will be my role going forward. You can book Jody or me for a visit through Next Level, but even if I don't go on-site, you will still get my input as Jody puts together his final plan. OK, business aside, let's get to the meat of this article.

FOUR MOST COMMON ISSUES

I don't like to oversimplify the sometimes complex relationships between the many factors that produce whitetail hunting and land management success. Still, four issues consistently come up on most of the properties I visit.

Habitat: The No. 1 reason to have someone look at your property is not to help you figure out where to put your tree stands, though we can do that, too. The main value of a good consultant is getting a fresh set of eyes on your habitat.

During the 30 years I have been managing whitetails and land, I've been surprised at the impact good habitat can have on the health and potential upside of buck quality. The average buck size is noticeably better after a few generations of improved conditions.

I've also seen how great habitat can affect your property's ability to hold a higher number of mature bucks. The holding capacity of mature bucks is a complex issue, and one that I dare not oversimplify because there are quite a few factors influencing that number. But the easiest one to assess and improve is habitat.

Here is my definition of great whitetail habitat, and I'm sure I will surprise some people: Great whitetail habitat is ideally able to support a high percentage of a deer's daily nutritional needs without food plots or farm fields. In the perfect world, deer get to pick and choose from nature's smorgasbord those things that meet their needs best each day. They know what they need — it's hard-wired in. Food plots, as important as they are, are the second consideration. Habitat is No. 1.

Deer that live in prime habitat enter food plots each evening with their stomachs half full from browsing all day rather than 25 percent full from picking through the substandard leftovers of an overgrazed buffet. Deer know what is best for them, and that's what they eat — when it's there. When it isn't there, they eat whatever they can find. When you let that soak in, you can see why

great habitat is a critical part of managing a deer hunting property.

Almost all the properties I have visited had poor-quality habitat. Although the deer weren't starving, they also weren't getting the best nutrition nature can offer.

Of course, the cure is a lot tougher than the diagnosis. Great habitat is the result of a few consistent practices. First, you need good ground-level vegetation of the right kind (stuff that deer like to eat), and then you must keep it that way rather than letting nature turn it into woody stems again within a few years.

So, you need a way to keep it young and edible. The cure is timber stand improvement and fire, as a simple starting point. Well, maybe it isn't so simple. Neither of these practices is a simple chore, but both can transform a property faster than anything else you can do.

You can plant habitat, too, and that's a good second step, but planting is a lot harder (and the results take longer to see) than simply letting nature do the hard work by thinning and burning. You probably need to do all three: thin, burn and plant, eventually.

Too many deer: Rarely

on my visits did I find a property with too few deer or, for that matter, the correct number for the habitat involved. Usually, the properties have too many deer — for several reasons. The ideal deer density is another complex issue (and one I'm not going to attempt to open here), but the results speak for themselves. Having too many deer is a problem for three reasons.

First, too many deer make it difficult to grow the best possible habitat (browse). I have already discussed the importance of great browse. When there are a lot of deer, they eat all the best stuff as soon as it comes out of the ground. In extreme cases, they can wipe out preferred species that, according to experts who study this stuff, might never return. Given the importance of quality habitat, that's a tough pill to swallow.

Second, too many deer will create what the experts call social stress. It's difficult to measure this in the real world because it's impossible to have a control group against which to judge the quality gains of the test group. In other words, how much increase in buck quality and doe body weight is the result of better nutrition, and how much is

the result of less stress in lower-density areas? I don't know. All we can go by is the fact that experts who have isolated the cause and effect say there is a measurable difference.

Third, too many deer means that some of them are very hungry at certain times, or maybe all of them are a little bit hungry most of the time. Again, you can have deer or you can have really healthy deer. The really healthy herd will achieve better quality in measurable elements such as antler size and body weight.

I witnessed this firsthand on a few properties I've owned. When deer numbers are high, the deer feel stress regarding food. In those places, they head to food sources with much more urgency than they do in areas with lower densities. This makes food plots the best places to shoot deer in those settings. The deer have very limited choices for food, and they are always a bit hungry — or at least they seem to be — so here they come, pouring out of the woods. On properties with fewer deer and better habitat, the deer are much harder to kill on food plots because they don't feel the same sense of urgency to hit those places hard during daylight.

You might think that stressed deer are

■ Here's the Next Level Consulting team, left to right: Jody Holdbrooks, lead biologist; Dr. Carroll Johnson, agronomist and weed scientist; Dr. Joyce Tredaway, agronomist and weed scientist; and the author, Bill Winke.





■ Burning timber habitat on a regular basis will keep browse in an early stage of growth where it's most edible and nutritious to deer. This is one of several practices that can make a huge difference in the quality of your habitat, browse and ultimately your whitetails.

easier to kill, and you're right. But they also don't reach their genetic potential, and therein lies the tradeoff. So when I visit a

property, one of the first things I try to figure out is the goals of the landowner. I might have ideas of what the place should look like, but it's possible my goals will differ from the landowner's. Deer density is one of those issues that we sometimes have to discuss at length before I concede to their goals or they agree to lower the density.

You can have both — to a degree. With an aggressive habitat management plan and great food plots with lots of diversity, it's possible to have a very hunt-able number of deer (more than enough for fun, rewarding hunting) while still achieving high quality. After we talk it through, that's usually the goal of the clients I meet with. But again, getting there is not always easy.

There's only one way to reduce deer numbers (short of letting nature wipe them out with some kind of disease), and that is to shoot them. Improving habitat is hard work, and reducing deer numbers is also hard work. Granted, it's rewarding to shoot deer, but it still takes time to get them out of the field and to the processor. If you have a big number

that you need to remove, shooting does become a higher priority than buck hunting. Some people aren't willing to make that

sacrifice, and for all the talk to the contrary, they never get it done.

Figuring out the best number of deer for a specific property is another complex issue related to the quality of the range and, to a lesser extent, the hunting practices of nearby hunters and the density and type of predators. That discussion is beyond the scope of this article. That's why you hire a consultant, right?

Prioritizing antler score: This has been another interesting discussion I've had with most of my clients. They all want to shoot 180-inch deer each season. Don't we all? In some situations, that's realistic (usually, those are huge properties or in really great neighborhoods), but in most cases, bucks of that size are uncommon. When I get on-site, I spend a good bit of time trying to figure out what is a realistic target buck for the landowner.

One client in Kentucky hired me to make the trip just to help him figure out how to shoot more 180-inch deer. When I left, I believe I had him convinced that antler score is, to a certain extent, just the product of luck. Sure, you can tweak

the final number upward a few notches through great habitat and prime food sources, but age is a more realistic measurement of success. Age first and antler size second. Most older bucks won't have huge antlers. Most will have average antlers, and only a few genetic freaks will grow huge.

The true challenge is to create a place where those genetic freaks feel at home long enough to reach their potential. That's another can of worms for another time. (It relates not only to habitat, but dominance hierarchies and the need to remove old, genetically inferior bucks before they can run your better bucks out of town.) Again, like most things we encounter in deer and land management, the cure is harder than the diagnosis.

Poor-quality food plots: It's amazing how many deer hunting properties have poor or insufficient food plots — usually both. The mindset seems to be that if the deer run out of food after the season, that's OK. As long as they have enough food to keep them around until the season is finished, the landowner is happy. The real goal needs to be to meet all the deer's nutritional requirements throughout the entire year. You want them to be healthy, not just to survive.

The team at Whitetail Institute is really good at assessing how to improve food plots. You should take full advantage of that service. They really understand soil science. Plus, clients get access to their agronomist, weed scientist, and wildlife biologist, and that alone can make a big difference. If you want healthy deer that fully express their genetic potential, they need to have the best food all year. It's surprising how many properties lack that critical element.

LESS-COMMON ISSUES

Many less common issues come up when trying to understand the dynamics of a property. Most of these are related to the neighborhood and specifically to the direct neighbors. What are they planting? What are they shooting? When are they hunting? Where are they hunting? What's the likelihood of change? All of those factors greatly impact how you manage your property, and to a great extent, they influence how successful you can be long-term. I spend a lot of time trying to help the landowner understand how his property rates in that way.

I remember one visit I made to a property in southern Illinois. The tract seemed to offer great opportunities on paper, but when I walked it and talked at length with the landowner, the pieces just didn't add up. Early on, he told me that he had a standing offer to sell it and asked me what I would do.

Based on what he was telling me about the property, what I saw on the ground and the history of the property from the previous owner, I recommended that he sell it and move on. Within a week, it was sold. That's not the normal outcome of my visits, but there's always discussion about the potential upside each property offers and whether it's worth fighting the battle or whether it's smarter to move on.

I've also made my clients a lot of money through the years by understanding the government programs that can actually pay you to improve wildlife habitat. That money is out there through various programs. You just need to know where to look and what practices will make the most difference on your property. You aren't taking that money from the tax-

payer. That has already been done. You are just putting that money to good use.

CONCLUSION

Those are some of the things we look at when visiting a property, among other considerations. You can study tons of material and make all those critical decisions and improvements yourself. But even then, it can sometimes be hard to diagnose the true reasons why your property is coming up short and then prioritizing actions to fix it. Getting this plan right can save you years of time. That's why consultants serve a valuable role if you're serious about creating the best possible property for growing and hunting whitetails.

If you're interested in a visit from the Next Level consulting team, contact Jody Holdbrooks at (800) 688-3030, or go to the Whitetail Institute website and fill out the request form at whitetailinstitute.com/next-level-consulting.



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A photograph of a hunter in a forest, kneeling next to a deer. The hunter is wearing a bright orange beanie, a high-visibility orange vest over a dark long-sleeved shirt, and camouflage pants. The deer is lying on the ground, which is covered in fallen brown leaves. The background consists of many thin, bare trees, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

WHEN PASSION AND PURPOSE COLLIDE



The desire to provide wildlife with the resources to thrive is seemingly hard-wired into the DNA of land managers driven by passion and purpose. And they wouldn't change a thing.

■ Text and Photos by
Kristopher M. Klemick

Though our time is limited, we have things we're passionate about in life. For some people, it's spending a day on the water fishing, or perhaps it's restoring old things or building something out of nothing. Regardless of the hobby or cause, we pursue these activities for the satisfaction they provide. We do it because we enjoy doing it, though each of us have our own versions of that joy.

Take painting, for example. Hand a group of passionate painters blank canvases and you're likely to wind up with pieces ranging from, "What in the world?" to remarkable paintings. The beauty of each is in the eye of the beholder. However, their affection is unmistakable for people with the shared passion for a paintbrush.

But what happens when you combine that passion with the calling of a higher purpose? Consider volunteers or people who serve. Find someone who regularly shows up at their local pet shelter, soup kitchen, community or church group, and I'll show you a fulfilled person who altruistically continues paying things forward a thousand-fold.

The same holds true for whitetail hunters. For people passionate about all things whitetail, and when that passion is firmly grounded in purpose, the results can be masterful. The tracts of land we hunt aren't simply landscapes across the whitetail's range. No, these people — folks like you and I, who read Whitetail News cover to cover — create a habitat that produces some of our areas' largest, healthiest whitetails.

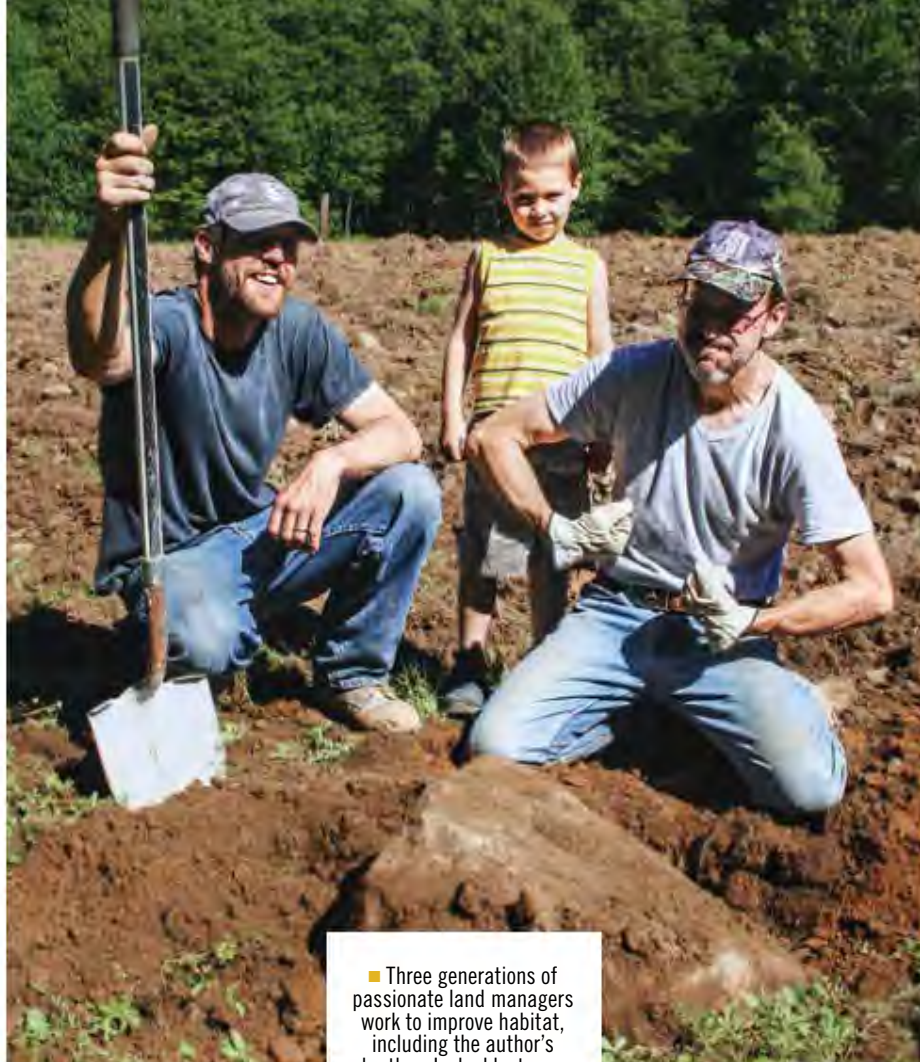
RECOGNIZING THE COLLISION

I vividly recall the moment I realized my passion and purpose were deeply connected, and not just in my desire to see mature bucks and well-nourished doe and fawns. My aspirations at that moment were crystal clear: For wildlife to flourish on the land we've been entrusted to care for during our brief time.

It was 2015, my dad, Mike, younger brother, Joel, and I were struggling to clear the piles of limbs and trees we had fallen around the outer perimeter of a small two-dozen-tree apple or-



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BREAKING GROUND



■ Three generations of passionate land managers work to improve habitat, including the author's brother, Joel; oldest son, Kaden; and father, Mike.

chard that had been struggling for sunlight, water, and soil nutrients. Flintlock season had just ended, and we were already looking for a reason to get back into the woods. Blue skies and 40-degree sunshine on a free Saturday seemed to make for the perfect opportunity to tackle the project. Unfortunately, it was the middle of winter on top of our mountain in north-central Pennsylvania, and 2 feet of fresh, wet snow challenged our reasoning for attempting such a project that time. The long, stretched-out branches acted like rakes, pulling us back just as hard as we tried dragging them forward. The deep snow quickly became exhausting to push through, and each trip into the wood line resulted in tripping over hidden branches, logs and rocks.

"Remind me why we're doing this," my dad said jokingly as he and I crossed paths between the forest and orchard. Without skipping a beat, my immediate response was, "We do it for the deer."

We laughed and continued for the next couple of hours until the job was complete, not once pausing to consider that we were likely participating in an exercise in futility, nor questioning whether we'd lost our minds. We recognized that although the work was challenging, our efforts served a greater purpose and would pay dividends for future orchard production that would benefit the wildlife we cherish.

In fact, I believed so strongly in that cold February phrase that we added it to the end of our annual What Happens at PA Deer Camp, Stays at PA Deer Camp NCPA Outdoors YouTube video that year, (and every video thereafter), ultimately even trademarking it with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH JUST PASSION

For many who enjoy getting into the whitetail woods a couple of days — or weeks for those who have the oppor-

tunity — when the season is finished, so is their deer desire. Hunting is simply a means to an end. Fill the freezer with high-protein venison, and all is well until the next year. And that's OK. There is nothing wrong with such a philosophy. As we know, hunting has been the most effective management tool for decades, and hunters contribute more to a healthy, stable, deer population than we take. Society and white-tailed deer would forever be at odds with the unsustainable, explosive overpopulation and habitat degradation that can occur without us. To that end, deer hunting has been a rite of passage for generations, and being a part of that passion-fueled crowd — no matter the level of dedication or enthusiasm — is nothing to dismiss or sell short.

THE ULTIMATE COMBINATION

As I considered the title for this article, I realized how connected passion and purpose are. They're about as inseparable as a mature whitetail and her yearling fawns at feeding time. When you've been bitten by the bug as hard



■ The author's youngest son, Kam, celebrates his first buck, taken on the third day of Pennsylvania's 2023 rifle season.

as most of us reading Whitetail News, the thought of not testing soil nutrient levels or turning dirt, forgoing a beneficial mineral supplement program, or not planting year-round, high-protein food sources is too painful to accept and just seems wrong.

The desire to provide wildlife with the resources to thrive is something seemingly hard-wired into the DNA of a passion-and-purpose-driven land manager. Hunting is simply a byproduct of the pursuit.

Finding purpose in the things you're passionate about can provide lifelong lessons and memories. For me, whether it's watching my oldest son, Kaden, share a deeply personal connection with his 2023 buck (pictured in this article), or my youngest son, Kameron, showing a beaming smile with his first buck on opening day, you know you're doing your part for the greater good, helping reduce any deficiencies, providing premier food sources where needed, and eliminating natural and man-made challenges.

I don't have to remind you why we do it. Clearly, it's not for our own good, and I intend to keep it that way. Onward.



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LESSONS LEARNED:

37 YEARS

OF PLANTING IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CLOVER



These insights will help deer managers looking to grow America's No. 1 food plot forage.

■ by **Gerald Almy**

Wealthy landowners and hunting clubs have doubtless planted more acres of Imperial Whitetail Clover than I have. But other than some staff employees of Whitetail Institute, there are probably few people who have planted this iconic seed blend for more seasons.

I know because I approached Ray Scott about writing an article on his new seed blend for deer the first year it came out. Ray wrote me back a personal letter inviting me down to talk about his new passion and pursue the article. I still have and cherish that letter.

Sadly, the trip to Alabama and the article never worked out. But that was the year I began a life-long passion for planting this amazing clover. The year: 1988, 37 years ago.

Every year since, this clover has formed a major part of my deer management program on my land in western Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

Having planted Imperial Whitetail Clover for the past 37 years, I have learned a lot about this unique blend. I have also made almost every mistake possible in growing it. But I learned from my mistakes. Hopefully, some of what I've learned will be of value to Whitetail News readers.

These insights will likely be especially useful to deer managers who, like me, have only small acreages to work with and need to get maximum production and attractiveness to deer out of their ½-, 2- or 3-acre plots.

1) Plant in the best soil you have. I've grown some passable IWC plots in really terrible dirt. They grew, and deer used them. But they didn't grow tall, lush and loaded with nutrients like those I've sown on the best soil I have.

Take it from someone who's learned the hard way. Use Extreme, Edge or No-Plow for those areas. Or simply convert the locations to cover — a vital component of a well-rounded deer management plan.

Save the premier clover seed for premier soils, or the closest approximation you have. High pH, nutrient-rich, clay, loamy bottomlands are the best sites to plant Imperial Whitetail Clover. If you have pretty good dirt in some areas but it's upland and drier, turn to Alfa-Rack.

Though soil pH can be amended with lime, it's best to start with soils that are closest to 7.0 (neutral). My best soils are mostly in the 6.3 to 6.6 pH range, and that

works fine for this clover, with occasional liming when the pH drops off. Soils with the highest phosphorous and potassium levels before you start are also best.

2) Don't skip getting a soil test. Using this simple test lets you learn the pH and nutrient levels of each potential food plot site. Soil test kits are available from Whitetail Institute or through local farm co-ops and agricultural colleges. The test will tell you how much lime you need to add per acre and will reveal vital information about the nutrients needed to successfully plant this blend of proprietary ladino clovers.

From season to season, the soil of a plot will vary as plants such as clover produce excess nitrogen and use phosphorous and potassium. Only conducting a soil test every year will tell you these crucial things. And a quick reminder: Don't get the test done and then ignore the information it gives you.

3) Like all living things, IWC has a lifespan. Monitor the health of your plots, and see whether they have gone from young to prime of life, 2 to 4 years old, to declining — typically 5 to 6. When you see older stands start to struggle compared to younger plantings, it's time to throw in the towel. The plants might grow slower, have yellow or whitish leaves, and have more stems and fewer leaves, or root problems. This usually won't happen if you control weeds and take care of the plot for five years — sometimes a bit longer. But when it does, realize it's time to move on.

4) Don't ignore the nutrient needs of middle-aged plots. Most food plotters apply fertilizer and lime before planting clover. But many fail to realize these vital components of the soil — such as phosphorous, potassium and boron — can be depleted from year to year. You need to do a soil test every year and amend the dirt as indicated by that test. I generally use 0-46-0 combined with 0-0-60 or a 3-18-18 mix used by local farmers for their alfalfa fields to improve the productivity of my established clover plots.

Lime might also be required to keep the pH at 6.5 or higher. These steps will keep your plots growing lush and thick and allow them to provide the best nutrition for deer. And by enabling them to grow aggressively, these clovers will outcompete and choke out most weeds.



PHOTO BY GERALD ALMY

■ Save Imperial Whitetail
Clover seed for premier
soils, or the closest
approximation you have.

they choke and shade them out and also give off chemicals (glucosinolates) that further inhibit weed growth. That gives you close to a weed-free plot after they complete their growing cycle in late winter.

6) Be sure to plant during the recommended time frames. I've tried other dates and grown acceptable clover, but for the best results, follow the guidelines on the seed bag or online at whitetailinstitute.com.

There's a reason the scientists at Whitetail Institute recommend specific time-frames for planting. Years of research and input from field testers have proven that those are the best dates for seeds to emerge and young plants to thrive. To make things even more precise, each region of the country has a specific time frame based on data from thousands of deer managers throughout the United States and Canada.

7) Realize you don't have to plant IWC to grow IWC. Besides the straight offering of this clover blend, IWC is included in many other Whitetail Institute products. I never tire of admiring the beauty of a pure stand of IWC shimmering in golden evening or silver morning sunlight. Nor will I tire of seeing the bucks and does it attracts. But the many attributes of this plant have led the Whitetail Institute to include it in many of its products, combined with other forages, such as brassicas and cereal grains.

You can try to make these mixtures yourself, but trust me, the pros at Whitetail Institute have researched all the possibilities and offer several perfectly portioned mixtures that include IWC. It's blended with oats, brassicas and alfalfas, among others.

One of my favorites, Fusion, is a mixture of the company's proprietary chicory with IWC. This is a great combination for drier areas and uplands with soils that are poorer than those in bottomlands. Look at the ingredient tags and you'll find the world's No. 1 deer clover in a surprising number of Whitetail Institute products — even those for the less-than-ideal conditions of most kill plots in woods.

8) IWC can form the backbone of a food plot program. With IWC growing on your land, you'll always attract deer. Then you can step back and look at the other needs you have for additional perennial plots and annuals that provide lots of tonnage to keep deer on your land during the heat of summer and cold winter weather.

9) Consider planting it with a nurse crop, which is a plant sown with another forage to grow faster and taller and alleviate some of the feeding pressure from deer off the target crop. This allows the clover to grow with less early cropping down by whitetails until it establishes stronger roots and grows larger leaves.

A nurse crop also creates a moist, protected environment for clover seed germination. The protective plants offer shade, a high-humidity environment near the soil surface and a solid growing foundation. Their deep tap roots also scavenge nutrients from deep in the soil and deposit them at higher levels where the clover can use it. And when the annual nurse crop dies, it provides organic matter to the clover plot.

I generally use Whitetail Oats for this but have also had success with plain generic wheat. Till in the oats or wheat to a depth of ½ to 1 inch, and then tamp down the soil, preferably with a cultipacker. Just running over it with the tractor tires also works. Then plant the clover on the smoothed, firm seed bed. If you plant right before a rain, that's all you have to do. Otherwise, you can pack it down again for better soil-to-seed contact. You can mow the cereal grain down in spring or let it go to seed, and turkeys and quail will feed on it.

10) It survives drought well. In my area, rain is scarce. Many areas across the country have suffered similar droughts in recent years. We go weeks at a time with no measurable precipitation. The ability to withstand dry weather is always something I look for in a food plot seed.

IWC was created with this as one of its most important qualities through Whitetail Institute's selective breeding program. The seed emerges and young plants thrive with just a shower here

5) You need to rotate with annuals.

When your clover plot has seen its best days, don't replant with fresh clover seed, no matter how good the plot was for growing. The soil needs a new type of forage to eliminate pest, disease and root issues specific to clover that might have slowly developed through four to six years.

The clover has added nitrogen to the soil as it grew. Take advantage of that by planting an annual that can use that free available nutrient and save on fertilizer costs.

Brassicas such as Winter Greens and Tall Tine Tubers are good, as are Power Plant and Whitetail Oats. I particularly like Ravish Radish and other brassica plants because they almost eliminate weeds from a potential site for future plantings. They grow so strongly that



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and there. Part of this is because of the plant's superior genetics. But it's also helped with the addition of Rainbond, a coating on each seed that helps new plantings establish even in dry times.

This past year, I planted a 1-acre plot of IWC when it looked like rains were going to come every five to 10 days. That would be enough to let the young stand flourish.

Unfortunately, the weather forecast was way off. Just enough rain came to make the plot emerge. Then it stopped. For more than 20 days, there was no rain. Finally, a tropical storm brought needed moisture, and the crop took off like gangbusters. Thanks go to Rainbond and years of selective breeding to create clover plants that withstand severe drought.

11) It benefits from spraying selective herbicides. No matter how well you till the soil before planting, weeds and grasses will eventually find their way into clover plots. When they do, you might need to spray a product such as Arrest MAX. This will control the most common grasses that can invade clover plots. If broadleaf weeds become a problem, the herbicide Slay will eradicate those when used according to directions.

12) It benefits from frequent, well-timed mowing. Before spraying, or along with spraying, be sure to mow the plot to control weeds and grasses when they grow taller than the clover. Also mow when the clover plants start to blossom. Don't mow, though, when the weather is extremely hot and dry.

Mowing will control weeds and encourage new growth of more tender, protein-rich leaves. I've found the clover jumps back strongly just a few days after mowing, and that's the plot deer will head for, choosing it above unmowed plots.

13) It provides almost year-round high-protein forage for whitetails. In many of the southern and middle parts of the country, IWC provides a year-round food source for deer. In extremely cold regions, there might be a



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- Can be planted in spring or fall.



few months when it goes dormant, typically just January and February.

14) It was created specifically for white-tailed deer and has been tested throughout North America. Further, this product is continually being improved. One test involved 30,000 plants that were finally narrowed down to 50. Eventually, only a small fraction of those were included in the current mix because they showed maximum benefits for deer.

15) Don't think it's the only forage you need to plant. Whitetails like variety. Give them warm-season legumes, such as the forage soybeans and cowpeas in Power Plant. Include Ravish Radish, Winter Greens, Tall Tine Tubers, Fusion and Destination in your deer nutrition program.

16) It creates hubs of rutting activity during the breeding season, attracting mature bucks. Older bucks tend to hole up in thick cover during summer and early fall. But when the breeding season kicks in during late October and November in most areas, all that changes.

The best prime habitat areas and food sources the does have had for themselves begin attracting mature bucks. Bucks know that's where the does are. On my land, that means IWC fields. One of the most consistent places I've found for a November or December stand is next to an IWC plot that adjoins dense cover.

The bucks might go there to eat or find does. But that's where they'll be, providing a rare chance to see such majestic, reclusive animals in

daylight. My favorite spot is a stand in a strip of brush or Conceal offering a corridor of cover between two IWC plots.

17) There is a huge difference between IWC and generic white clovers. My job as a writer on food plots requires that I experiment, trying various products and lower-priced options. But having sown almost every clover available for deer, I've learned that there is a significant advantage to using the Whitetail Institute's offering. It was created for deer by agricultural scientists through years of cross-breeding, research and field testing, and the benefits of that show in the final product.

18) You need to be patient. IWC won't jump out of the ground like Winter Greens or Whitetail Oats. It's not supposed to. Ladino clovers take time to establish and reach full growth stage. If you're patient, though, you'll have a lush clover plot in spring from a fall planting (my choice) or a great fall plot from a spring planting.

CONCLUSION

I've learned many lessons from 37 years of planting IWC. But ultimately, it boils down to putting in the effort and not cutting corners. Do that and you'll have a high-protein forage that grows almost year-round, lasts four to five years, and improves the health of does and bucks while attracting them in for a clean shot.

What more could you ask from a food plot forage?



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■ by William Cousins

Summer Slam has become one of my favorite choices for late-spring or early summer planting. This mix contains three forages that have dramatically different seed counts per pound. It took several spring plantings at various research stations to get the proper plant populations dialed in. That allows us to correctly blend the seed count for this mix. Plant Summer Slam in late spring when soil temperatures are 65 degrees or warmer, and you will find this to be an excellent choice for late-spring and summer plots.

Peas are the first component of Summer Slam. They are an excellent forage choice because of their high protein content and resilience in hot or dry conditions. These legumes are highly digestible and provide essential nutrients that support deer growth and antler development, making them a favorite among hunters and wildlife habitat managers. Planted during spring or early summer, Summer Slam peas thrive in medium- to well-drained soils and can withstand periods of drought, making them a reliable option for antler building food plots. Additionally, their rapid growth and ability to regenerate after grazing ensure a consistent food source for deer throughout the growing season.

The second component is vetch, an excellent forage option

for deer, known for its high nutritional value and adaptability. This legume is rich in protein and serves as an energy-dense food source. Vetch tolerates a variety of soil types, including poorer, thinner soils. Additionally, its nitrogen-fixing properties improve soil health, making it a sustainable choice for long-term food plot management. Its palatability and resilience make vetch a critical component in diverse forage plots designed to attract and sustain healthy deer populations. Vetch is also a preferred forage for turkeys and upland game birds.

The final component is alyce clover, a warm-season annual legume that is also tolerant of varying soil conditions. The nutritional quality of alyce clover is excellent. Crude protein is typically 20 to 30 percent in plots with good fertility, and alyce clover is highly digestible, making it an essential ingredient of a premium summer forage.

Alyce clover is not a true clover, as it does not have a trifoliate leaf, which is characteristic of true clovers.

If you have questions or need advice related to food plots or habitat management, call our experts at Whitetail Institute. Unfortunately, because of hurricane damage to crop areas, seed supply is very limited this season.





SUMMER SLAM

- 25%-30% protein-packed, highly digestible peas are mixed with two additional high-protein forage legumes providing exceptional nutrition that is extremely palatable to deer.
- Summer Slam is an excellent deer attracting forage and creates great brooding habitat for game birds.
- Summer Slam is exceptionally drought and heat tolerant and performs well on a thinner sandy type to medium heavy soils.
- Recycles nutrients that are deep in the soil profile while improving soil tilth and producing 3000-4000lbs of biomass per acre.
- Summer Slam establishes quickly - Plant alongside timber stands to create soft edge habitat for food and cover.




RESEARCH=RESULTS



CROSSROADS WITH THE BURTONS

From the oval track to the whitetail woods, a father and son tag team a couple of late-season bucks.

■ by **Gordy Krahn**



■ Jeb Burton, left, and his father, Ward, have invested substantial time and energy grooming their property in Halifax County, Virginia, where they plant food plots and manage the land to create and maintain habitat for wildlife — especially white-tailed deer.

Ward Burton taught his son the merits of going fast — we're talking 200 mph fast — so Jeb Burton has been gripping the wheel and stomping the gas pedal his entire adult life. Yeah, that Ward Burton — NASCAR legend and 2002 Daytona 500 winner. The senior Burton also taught Jeb how to slow it all down — to take his foot off the pedal. For that, father and son turned to the great outdoors. Hunting and land management have balanced their lives — a calming yin to their sometimes-hectic yang. It has also afforded them the means to spend time together in the whitetail woods.

Jeb Burton has been competing on the track since 2008 when he began his professional racing career at 16 in what was known as the NASCAR Whelen All-American Series at South Boston Speedway. Later, he recorded only two starts in the NASCAR Xfinity series before making his NASCAR Cup series debut in 2015 at Atlanta Motor Speedway. He went on to make 33 NCS starts and 109 NXS starts from 2013 to 2022, with his first Xfinity win coming in the spring race at Talladega in 2021.

The Burtons have also been busy in the whitetail woods. This past year, each tied their tag to a dandy buck — the result of time and energy spent grooming their property in Halifax County, Virginia, where they plant food plots and manage the land to create and maintain habitat for all wildlife, but especially white-tailed deer.

We caught up to Jeb with another deer season — and racing season — in the rear-view mirror and picked his brain about the bucks he and his dad shot this past fall and to find out what the future might hold for him on and off the oval track in the coming year.

Whitetail Institute: Talk about your racing career and some of the highs and lows. What put you on this path, and how do you achieve a balance between racing and the other things in your life, especially hunting?

Burton: "Right now, I'm driving in the NASCAR Xfinity series, and I've been lucky enough to win two Xfinity races and a truck race recently, but my racing career hasn't been perfect by any means. We're working extremely hard to make



■ Jeb Burton took his most recent buck from a food plot on the final day of the season.

it to the Cup series one day — that's where we want to be. I'm lucky to be able to do what I do, and it's been a long journey to get to this point. Every day, we work hard to try to get to the next level.

Because of my dad, I grew up around racing. It's the same with hunting. I was involved at an early age and fell in love with both. I've been hunting whitetails with my dad here in Virginia since I was around 9 years old, and hunting and racing kind of go hand in hand for me. When I'm racing, I do everything I can to be the best I can be, and it's the same with hunting. And then there's our TV show Crossroads with the Burtons, which kind of combines the two. Crossroads isn't just about shooting something. It's about spending time outdoors and telling a story — about what's going on in our lives away from the racetrack."

WI: Tell us about the buck your dad shot this past season.

Burton: "I've put Dad on the last two deer he's shot. We had the sheds from the buck he shot last season from three years back. We watched that deer from when he was 3 years old all the way until we were lucky enough to harvest him. Dad's deer was a big, old mature buck, and one of our [TV] partners from Beretta was filming with us, so that was cool. We got some great footage. We had quite a bit of intel on this deer from game cameras and earlier sightings. We knew exactly where he was hanging out and when

thanks to the trail cams.

The food plot where Dad was hunting was planted with different food sources — Whitetail Imperial Clover on one side and No Plow on the other, along with some Whitetail Oats Plus. It was late in the season, and the deer were really hitting the No Plow. Dad was in a Redneck blind overlooking the food plot when the old buck showed up. When it got to about 75 yards from the blind, Dad made a good shot. Dad's buck is at the taxidermist now, and we're looking forward to getting it back."

WI: How about the evening when you shot your buck?

Burton: "It was the last day of the season, and I was hunting on a different side of the farm, also in a blind. We had been targeting an older buck, and I was hunting with one of my buddies, Paul, and he was filming. We were running a little late, and we had to take our time sneaking up to the blind there were already at least 10 deer in the field. We got in there successfully and saw about 15 deer that evening, including a bunch of young bucks. And then, just before dark, lo and behold, the big buck stepped out onto the food plot. We got some good footage of him for a little bit because I really didn't have a good shot. It wasn't until he crossed over to the other side of the field when I took the shot, and by then there was literally only two minutes of shooting light left. The food plot was the key to making this happen. Toward



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the end of the year, the deer — including the mature bucks — are feeding heavily in the food plots trying to put weight back on from rutting so much. So, we really focus on hunting the food plots at the end of the year.”

WI: You are blessed to have private land to hunt, which allows you to manage the deer population better, right?

Burton: “Yeah, we have a real diversity of habitat — some good oak and thick cut-over newly planted pines. We’ve also got a swampy area and grown-up cover and fields that we really haven’t touched. Luckily, we have a river that goes around our property, which helps deter encroachment. Our neighbor’s property across the river is highly agricultural — a lot of corn and soybeans. We’re lucky enough that we have a property where we can let deer go and let them grow, and we try to let the bucks go till they’re 6 to 8 years old — when they’re in their prime.”

WI: How do the Whitetail Institute products you use fit in with your overall

land management strategy? What products were you hunting over this past year when you and your dad shot your bucks?

Burton: “We use Imperial No-Plow a lot and Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus as well. Those two and the Imperial Whitetail Clover. The clover is great because you plant it one time, and it lasts for five years — all you need to do is spray, bush hog, and fertilize it. We spray it with Arrest Max herbicide, and that’s it.”

WI: But it’s much more than just you and your dad killing bucks on this land, isn’t it?

Burton: “I think that a lot of people who read articles like this kind of get turned off sometimes, you know because somebody has a lot more land than them and more deer than them, but that’s not what this conversation’s about. The message I want to convey is that it’s not just about killing something. It’s about being able to make the property better and create a better habitat for all wildlife. And the result of that is to be able to attract more deer and grow bigger deer,

and then you can enjoy that side of it. But if we don’t kill any big bucks, for us that’s fine.

“Any property can grow big deer. If you provide the habitat and the food, they’ll be there.

“Dad turned that property we’re hunting into the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, which has helped landowners in Virginia and Pennsylvania conserve over 45,000 acres of land. The Foundation manages habitat for endangered species, practices wise forestry management, stream-water mitigation and prescribed burns to control non-native growth, and other tools to preserve the integrity of the land. We partner with local, state and federal organizations, and work directly with landowners to share and advocate for conservation and land management best practices nationwide.

“And we take veterans and all kinds of foundation supporters hunting on that property. So, it’s not just about my dad and me hunting on the property. We do a lot of work to protect that property and



The advertisement features a large, vibrant image of a wild turkey in a grassy field. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo for the Whitetail Institute of North America, established in 1988, featuring a deer head. The text "SCRATCH ONE UP" is prominently displayed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image. In the bottom left corner, there is a bag of "Turkey Select CHUFA" seed. The bag is brown and features the Whitetail Institute logo, a picture of a turkey, and the text "Turkey Select CHUFA", "#1 Turkey Attractant", and "IMPERIAL WHITETAIL".

SCRATCH ONE UP

TURKEY SELECT CHUFA

Turkey Select is a high-quality chufa seed that attracts and holds turkeys on your property. Chufa plantings are considered by many to be the #1 attractant for turkeys. The nut-like tubers produced by Turkey Select are scratched up and devoured by turkeys.

ORDER TODAY! 800-688-3030 www.whitetailinstitute.com 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintala, AL 36043

DOUBLING DOWN FOR DEER

■ When asked which Whitetail Institute product he would choose if he could pick only one, Jeb Burton chose two. He is a big fan of No Plow, but if push came to shove, hands down it would be Imperial Clover.

"I would probably go with the clover," he said. "It's good for the deer, and it's good for the turkeys, and you have food available all year long. The clover is great because you plant it once, and, with a little care, it lasts for five years."

Imperial Whitetail Clover is a perennial that contains the only clover genetically designed specifically for white-tailed deer. It has an extremely high protein content, which is critical

for antler, muscle, and bone growth, and thrives in extreme cold as well as warm, dry climates.

An annual, Imperial No-Plow is a great option for those hard-to-get-at places where it can be difficult to maneuver heavy equipment. It's a high-protein planting that can provide up to nine months of attraction and nutrition for optimal deer growth and antler development. Preparation can be done with a four-wheeler, simple implements, or even hand tools. The mixture includes specially selected clovers, brassicas, radishes, and other forages, and it can be planted in a fully prepared seedbed or with minimal ground preparation sufficient to establish good seed-to-soil contact.

For more information, visit www.whitetailinstitute.com

make it better for the next generation of hunters and for the wildlife. And that property has been put in a conservation easement and will be protected forever. I'm going to try to get my girlfriend's 9-year-old son his first deer [this fall]. We'll have him shoot a doe first to get his confidence up, and then he will be ready to try for a buck. For me, this is what it's all about — paying it forward."

WI: What's on the horizon for Jeb

Burton?

Burton: "We're filming for Crossroads right now, and I just got back from an elk hunt two weeks ago and was lucky enough to harvest a good bull with my bow. As for racing, I should be back in the Xfinity Series next year, trying to win some more races; that's the plan. And, of course, I'll do a lot of whitetail hunting here in the fall."

WI: Do you have a dream car?

Burton: "Actually, I have two — both Chevys. I would someday like to have a '68 or '69 black Camaro, and I would also like a late-1980s model crew cab or single-cab two-door truck."

WD

SOIL TEST KIT

Whitetail Institute Soil Test Kits provide the data you need for great food plots. Professional laboratory soil testing is one of the most important things you can do to ensure food plot success. The Whitetail Institute offers professional results and recommendations for all Imperial Whitetail products, as well as other crops. Accurate fertilizer and lime recommendations are provided.

Don't want to wait for your kit?

DOWNLOAD YOUR SOIL TEST TODAY!

Instant online access can be found at: <https://bit.ly/35KoS7f>

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(Results are available 24-48 hours after the laboratory receives the sample.)

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Whitetail Institute

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THE MOST USEFUL SPRING/SUMMER ANNUAL POWERPLANT

This popular mix is amazingly versatile and gives deer a high-protein food source when they need it most.

■ by **Whitetail Institute Staff**

Most folks know that what you plant in spring can increase your chances of success and the quality of the deer you harvest in fall. Whitetail Institute offers the premier spring/summer annual scientifically formulated for whitetails. But that's not all. It's also as versatile as it is highly attractive to deer.

What is PowerPlant? PowerPlant is a spring/summer annual that's been designed to provide maximum high-protein forage to deer when they need it most: spring and summer. The main components in PowerPlant are vining soybeans and peas, which emphasize foliage growth rather than bean production the way ag beans do. These components are supplemented by sunn hemp, another warm-season legume that fulfills two roles in PowerPlant: as a high-protein forage deer love and as a structural plant. Together with small amounts of sunflowers in PowerPlant, the sunn hemp provides a lattice for the beans and peas to climb and maximize production instead of growing along the ground. The result is a tall stand of succulent, high-protein foliage so thick deer will often use it for cover.

And here's the kicker: When PowerPlant establishes, it will continue to grow and produce even as deer feed on it, not die when bitten off the way ag beans can. Be sure to plant at least 1 to 1.5 acres in areas of high deer density.

Suggested uses for PowerPlant: The most obvious use is to plant it strictly as a spring/summer forage for deer. That's its primary purpose, and no other spring/summer annual product Whitetail Institute has tested comes close.

But what about fall? One option is to mow PowerPlant in early fall. If you go that route, leave the clippings on top of the soil to dry out for a few weeks. Then, disk or till them into the soil and plant your fall annual. That's a great way to improve soil quality, give the soil a disease break for brassicas, and even help with weed control.

You don't have to remove all your PowerPlant to plant a fall annual at the site. Because you'll be planting at least 1 to 1.5 acres of PowerPlant in a spot, that leaves enough room for you to mow lanes through it and then plant the lanes in your favorite Whitetail Institute fall annual. PowerPlant keeps growing until it frosts, which means it can often keep growing

even into November in the warmest areas of the country. That's why planting fall annuals in lanes in PowerPlant is a killer hunting setup, as deer will step in and out of the PowerPlant and planted lanes throughout the day during the early season. Mowing and planting lanes in PowerPlant in the fall will also extend the life of the plot into the cold months when PowerPlant has died but is still providing cover for you and deer.

As a final note, as part of making PowerPlant the premier spring/summer planting for whitetails, Whitetail Institute has made it possible to spray PowerPlant to control the biggest enemy in its earliest stages: grass. PowerPlant is Arrest MAX approved. Spray Arrest MAX as soon as you see any grasses starting to encroach. You can spray Arrest MAX no matter how young PowerPlant is.

Give us a call if you have questions about PowerPlant and let us know if you come up with even more ways to use it in your food plot system.





THE BEST FOOD PLOTTING APP JUST GOT BETTER

Plot Perfection is now a free app. You can now get the industry's best food plotting app at no charge and begin building your food plot database.

The free version lets you lay out your property, add your plots to the map, and use our integrated soil testing services. Seamless soil testing is simple to use and fast to complete. Purchase the soil test through the app, download the submittal form when purchased, and send in the printed submittal form along with the soil and proof of purchase. After our laboratory receives it, you will have the results in 24 to 48 hours directly into your Plot Perfection account. There's no need to wait for the mail to be delivered.

In addition to the free version of the app, Whitetail Institute also offers a paid version that provides you with all the benefits of Plot Perfection for a small monthly payment. These benefits include lime, fertilizer, and spray calculators that automatically calculate the amount you need to add according to the plot size established when laying out your property. The "planning" feature lets you plan exactly what you want to do with each plot (for example, how much lime to add, how much fertilizer to add, and the correct amount of seed for each plot). After completing the previous steps, an "activities" feature turns your plan into action. You can add stand and camera locations on your map and create notes in your app with information you want to store about each field.

In the "settings" option of the app, you can add new fertilizers to Plot Perfection's auto calculator for blends available in your area, set up the details of your personal sprayer for the spraying calculator, adjust your mapping features and change your default measurement units in your calculators.

The app is available in the Google Play store, or for Apple users, go to www.plotperfection.com and add the link to your home screen.

This revolutionary app provides many practical features, which you can use for free.

by **Whitetail Institute Staff**





MY TROPHY WHITETAILS

DREW GILKERSON | TENNESSEE

■ My grandson Noah heart-shot this buck at 90 yards at our family's Destination plot.

DESTINATION PLOT



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

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TAKE A QUICK SURVEY**

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

TERRY HEPLER | PENNSYLVANIA

■ Whitetail Institute clover has been the backbone of my plots. Deer love it, and I rarely need to mow it since they seem to keep it clipped down. My deer have bigger bodies, and I see them more frequently now. The bucks grow bigger antlers, too.



MY TROPHY WHITETAILS



BRADLEY JOHNSON | MICHIGAN

■ I planted Whitetail Institute Oats Plus this year and had great results. Every time I went out, I saw multiple deer in these plots. I was amazed at how the deer were attracted to this. I will be planting more this upcoming year. I had multiple scrapes on the edges of each of my plots. Deer couldn't get enough. I killed my best buck so far this year over Whitetail Institute Oats Plus.

TERRY GRINESTAFF | PENNSYLVANIA

■ I love the products and they work better than [those from] my hometown seed company. The picture shows my granddaughter and son in Beets & Greens. It was her first buck, and she got it in archery season at 33 yards away.



JOHN MYERS | INDIANA

■ Great products really keep deer at home and grow some great racks. I have never called Whitetail Institute and not talked to a courteous professional person. I highly recommend their products.



PAUL DECIECHI | MICHIGAN

■ I planted Fusion in Fall 2022 and bought a Redneck blind for the food plot. I kept the windows closed at all times because the deer just poured into the plot from every direction. I did not shoot in 2022 but opened the window to shoot my biggest buck ever in 2023.





MY TROPHY WHITETAILS



MISSY CUEVAS MICHIGAN

■ My grandma, Barb Shear, 80, of Manchester, Michigan, had a lucky night Oct. 7, 2023. She shot an 8-point buck and within five minutes also shot a 10-point buck. She was hunting with her crossbow in her food plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover from Whitetail Institute. She and her family have seen a large increase in deer and turkeys since planting just a couple of years ago.



FOOD PLOT PLANTING DATES...



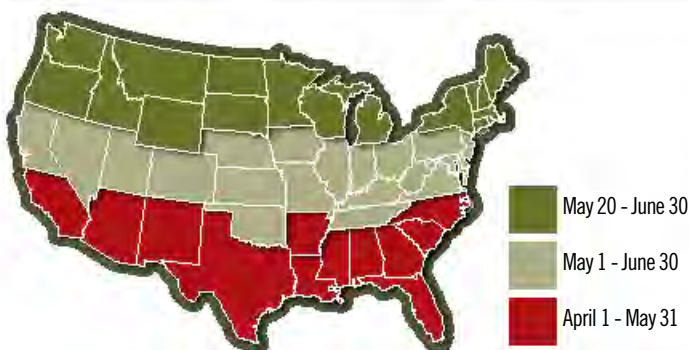
PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL CLOVER, ALFA-RACK PLUS, EXTREME, NO-PLOW, FUSION, CHIC MAGNET AND EDGE

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 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 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 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 | | |



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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

\$139.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$159.99
— (28 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail Conceal
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
POWERPLANT



50 LBS.-1.5-2-ACRE
PLANTING

\$134.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$140.00
— (50 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail PowerPlant
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**

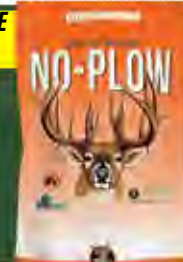


33LBS.-2.5-ACRE
PLANTING

\$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)
\$ _____

NEW**YOU SAVE
\$40.00****IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
SUMMER
SLAM****31.5 LBS. - .75
ACRE PLANTING****\$99.96 + tax**
Suggested Retail \$139.96
— (31.5 lb.) quantities of
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
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 \$13.00****ARREST
MAX
HERBICIDE****• 1 PINT-1 ACRE
• 1/2 GALLON-4 ACRES**
\$56.99 (1 pint)
Suggested Retail \$69.99
\$159.96 (1/2 gallon)
Suggested Retail \$169.00
— pint(s) of Arrest Max Herbicide
— 1/2 gallon(s) of Arrest Max Herbicide
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$**YOU SAVE
UP TO \$11.97****IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
MAGNET
MIX BLOCK****\$32.99 (one block)**Suggested Retail \$39.95
\$57.98 (two blocks)
Suggested Retail \$69.95
+ tax
— (2) -Pak blocks @ \$57.98
— (1) -Pak blocks @ \$32.99
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$**YOU SAVE
UP TO \$39.02****SLAY
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 Herbicide
— pint(s) of Slay 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 enclosedCharge to: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Credit Card: _____ Exp. _____

Date: _____ Sec.Code: _____

Signature: _____

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BACK-40 NOTEBOOK

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



OFF THE SWIFT STREAM

Time is a thief, so why give it an assist? That's a good resolution for a day on the deer stand. No hurrying.

The echoes of gunshots fade as the sun rises higher, and I realize the annual frenzy of the gun-season opener is almost finished. And with the din of rifle blasts — and most natural deer movement — coming to an end, it's time to wait.

All-day sits are still tradition here above the valley; sort of a throwback to stick-to-it-iveness of my youth, when 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. was a great time to shoot deer that other hunters bumped as they went in for lunch or shuffled around to warm up. That doesn't seem to work as well nowadays, but I stay put anyway, just in case. Still, I often find my mind drifting forward, anticipating the final hour of daylight instead of focusing on the here and now.

That's the modern mindset, I guess. Get something done, check it off, and get on with the next task. And I'm afraid it spills over into time afield. I need no more example than the open ridge to the northeast. Once choked with autumn olive, I'd planned and finally undertaken an invasive vegetation removal plan on 4 acres there. The questions and preparation seemed to take forever, and the labor — complete with masks, gloves, spray packs and hours of toil — was intense. But then it was finished, and as autumn fell, the area morphed into a pretty hardwood flat, and I immediately began thinking about where and when to start the next project. There was no deep breath or sigh of relief, and very few moments to sit back and appreciate the accomplishment. Just a checked box and an eye to the future.

Hunting season had taken a similar path. For weeks, it seemed, I anticipated and planned for the archery opener, which then came and passed with little fanfare. Same with duck season. And now gun-deer season. And here I am, peeking forward again to the day's final hour instead of simply letting time pass.

I know better, especially as I've aged. Fifty-eight years have taught me that time grinds on and events occur whenever the powers that be decree. Looking ahead with anticipation or anxiety doesn't make anything happen sooner, and it sure doesn't improve the outcome. It just makes you fret about things out of your control and robs you of the present. Time is a thief anyway, so why give it an assist?

That's a good resolution for this day on the deer stand. No hurrying. No thought of the golden hour other than to acknowledge its eventual arrival. Meanwhile, now is a fine time to just soak in the woods, watch wildlife and let time ease by naturally. And if a deer visits now and then, that'd be fine, too.

Before long, morning and much of the afternoon have drifted away, interrupted only by squirrels, woodpeckers, three deer and a cold lunch. And as the wind seems a bit chillier and my eyes adjust to the hazy setting sun, I realize that the much-anticipated final hour has arrived.

I hope it's fruitful. Moreover, I hope to appreciate and enjoy it, much as I have the previous nine hours of opening day. No journal or oral account of those minutes will reflect the value they held. To some, it was just time. Others might view it as duty or obligation. But to me this day, it was just time spent loafing in a shallow pool off of life's swift stream. And as the last minutes tick by, I'm in no hurry to push back into the current. It'll grab me soon enough.

After all, spring turkey season is just four months away, and I need to get ready.





RESEARCH EQUALS RESULTS



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CLOVER

Imperial Whitetail Clover provides attraction and up to 35% protein levels.
These proprietary clovers were developed by Whitetail Institute agronomists.

Still the leader since 1988



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VISIBILITY TO THE MAX...



**NEW
COLOR**

Redneck Blinds is excited to announce our all-new "Redneck Camo" option for the Game Changer 6x8, Big Country 6x7, and Buck Palace 6x6 Fiberglass Box Blinds.

The long-lasting Gel Coat finish will not scratch off from branches or other normal uses and provides contrast to blend in with fall colors.

SELECT BLIND COLOR



THE 6 X 8 GAME CHANGER PLATINUM 360° BLIND TAKES VISIBILITY TO THE MAX...

The Game Changer changes the way you hunt... Big enough to comfortably fit 3-4 adults, this blind is the ultimate solution to being able to scan a wide area while hunting with multiple hunters. Having more room to accommodate more helpful eyes to spot your trophy of a lifetime, the Game Changer really sets the bar high.

Combine the 46" tall vertical windows, with large oversized horizontal windows and roomy interior, and you have the ultimate blind for compound bow, crossbow or gun hunting. This combination of size and window functionality gives you plenty of room, visibility and angles to make a perfect shot when the moment of truth arrives. If there is the need to sleep in the blind to catch that big buck at first light without getting busted, the Game Changer has ample enough space to accommodate a small cot or air mattress!

FEATURES

- Made from long-lasting fiberglass
- Vertical and horizontal tempered, automotive glass windows for bow, crossbow, or gun hunting
- Closed cell foam insulated ceiling, acoustical foam covered walls for superior sound control and insulation
- 3 highly functional consoles pre-installed to help organize your hunting gear
- Built in shelves and gun holders
- Marine-carpeted foam floor liner
- Available with Deluxe 5ft, 10ft Stands and 5ft, 10ft Stairway Stands
- Available with Deluxe 5ft, 10ft & 15ft powder coated steel stands
- Full line of accessories available to enhance your hunting experience
- NEW "Redneck Camo" color option



6X8 GAME CHANGER

PLATINUM 360°

Weight :	550 lbs
Door Size :	30" Wide X 63" High
Exterior Size :	77" Wide X 100" Deep X 82" High
Interior Size :	70" Wide X 94" Deep X 80" High
Door Window :	18" Wide X 10" High
Front Window(s) :	36" Wide X 14" High
Side Window(s) :	25" Wide X 14" High
Corner Window(s) :	10" Wide X 46" High
	36" Height from floor to bottom of horizontal windows



ON 10FT DELUXE STAND



ON 10FT STAIRWAY