



Unusual harvest

Veterinarian Dr. Rocky White, left, and his father, Terry, are shown with this 3 1/2-year-old buck harvested by Terry White on the Curtis Kidd farm east of Lampasas. "Other than being taken just outside the city limits, the really awesome aspect of this buck is the 3 1/2-inch drop tine," said Rocky White. "This was the first low-fence buck I have ever seen with a drop tine in Lampasas County."

Understanding the shotgun

By HAROLD HARTON
Special Contributor

The shotgun is probably the most popular type of firearm, simply because of the many uses it provides -- from home defense to quail, dove, duck, deer, goose, squirrel and rabbit hunting, to skeet and trap shooting, which has become a high school competitive sport in some areas.

For many years, a loaded single- or double-barreled shotgun would have sat by the kitchen door for the pioneer housewife to use to kill skunks, coons or fox, as well as the hawk that was after her chickens.

I have my grandfather's old Remington double-barreled, exposed hammer shotgun that he carried horseback while driving cattle to market back when Indians were still a threat.

My own use of shotguns has been for dove, quail and pheasant hunting. I am not a "natural" good shot like a lot of my friends, but I still enjoy the smell of the burned powder, even when I miss.

The size of the shotgun bore has an interesting story. The gauge (size) of the shotgun represented the number of lead

balls to the pound, i.e., 12 balls equal 12 gauge, 16 equal 16 gauge, 20 equal 20 gauge. The .410 was the exception. That was the fraction of an inch measurement. The inch measurement for the 12 gauge is .729 inches; 20 gauge, .615 inches; the 28 gauge, .550 inches.

The choke represents the amount of constriction at the front end of the barrel. For instance, full choke is .040 inches, or 40 points; 20 points, .020 for modified; 10 points, .010 inches for the improved cylinder.

Due to this choke restriction, the round ball theory for gauge size is really not quite true, because the ball size had to be a bit smaller due to the restriction.

It is important for the serious shotgun shooter to pattern his or her gun with the load to be used for a given purpose. For example, let's say you will use a 20 gauge with one ounce of #6 shot, and your gun has a full choke. Your pattern should put 75 percent (or 165 pellets out of the 223) in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards.

By checking the number of shot in the load you will be shooting and the choke in your gun, you will be able to determine the percentage of shot in the 30-inch circle at 40 yards.



PHOTO BY HAROLD HARTON

I have my grandfather's old Remington shotgun that he carried horseback while driving cattle to market.

Does doe scent really attract deer?

By JED DUNNING
Special Contributor

I am amazed every year at the deluge of new products marketed for hunters in pursuit of white-tailed deer.

Hunters looking for a product that will provide an advantage to outsmart a trophy buck are faced with a confusing task, as there are a large number of scents, deodorizers, calls and attractants on the market. Many of these products claim unbelievable results, but that is a problem, as I don't believe the unbelievable.

Every year new products replace older ones that didn't last -- probably because they did not work as advertised.

Deer scent attractants are one category that is almost comical to analyze. These products play on the deer's sense of smell. Deer use their nose constantly to avoid danger, find food or find each other. They also are good at locating hunters by smell. Hunters who disguise their body odor often use doe urine.

White-tailed deer naturally leave urine scents wherever they live. Many lures are urine-based, and some are marketed with a serial number that is supposed to indicate which deer produced it. These products generally sell for \$5 to \$15 an ounce!

All deer are urinating in the field for free and at the same time, hunters are bringing their own deer urine in a small bottle and dumping it on the ground. Do they think the deer will like it better than the real thing?

My experience leads me to believe a proper and timely application of deer urine and natural glandular secretions will produce a desired reaction from deer. When used correctly, that can effectively mask human scent.

I like to use plain doe urine purchased in bulk and bottled for retail. This is by far the least expensive product available.

These products originate from collection pens at deer farms. The low cost allows usage in quantities that can make a difference.

I use plain undiluted doe urine dispensed with an atomizer bottle. I spray the air around my blind with a fine mist that will mask my odor downwind from the blind.

I also use a gland lure to make artificial rut scrapes around my hunting areas. Five or six scrapes are made around each blind. This process takes several applications over a two-week period during the pre-rut stage. I use about a quart of urine and an ounce of homemade buck lure during this process. When the bucks start freshening my scrapes, I can quit using my lure and depend on them to do the work.

Once again, I use the most economical product I can buy in a quantity that will be noticed. A pint of this urine costs about the same as an ounce of the top-shelf products. The deer-supplied product is free and fresh. I also have used doe urine and buck lure with a deer decoy and had good results.

As in all hunting and fishing endeavors, however, knowledge of the intended quarry is much more important than gimmicks or gadgets. Equipment must be up to the task, and trinkets cannot replace time in the field or on the water.

A hunter who is prepared and understands the seasonal patterns and reactions of a white-tailed deer can use scents and expect positive results. Improper application, on the other hand, can be detrimental. Natural scents are certainly easier to use and less likely to spook game.

Lures and scents that are marketed as highly specialized products should be removed from the field immediately after each hunt. Deer can become conditioned and non-reactive to a new smell if it is encountered often.

Jed Dunning, a rifle and bow hunter, owns and operates a deer processing facility and taxidermy shop in Lampasas. He also is a veteran hunting guide.

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