



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1941.

DEER BEING RESTORED BY 3-WAY CONTRACT BETWEEN RANCHERS, STATE, FEDERAL AGENCY

About 500 surplus white-tailed deer are being removed from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Southeastern Texas and distributed on ranches in south and central Texas in large-scale restocking operations to restore white-tails to their former ranges in the Lone Star State, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today. Some 350 bucks and does were trapped on the refuge in November and December 1940, and about 140 more adults will be taken, the report stated.

"This is a good example of what can be accomplished when the private individual and the State and Federal Governments cooperate to conserve wildlife," declared Refuge Manager James O. Stevenson.

The surplus deer are trapped on the Federal Refuge by employees of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission as part of a Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration project.

Bands of 10 to 25 deer are shipped to ranches where 5,000 to 25,000 acres of white-tailed deer ranges are available. Each rancher has agreed not to permit hunting of the deer for 5 years. The State has the option to continue the no-hunting agreement for another 5 years if it feels there aren't enough deer on the area to justify hunting at the expiration of the first 5-year period.

"These agreements between the ranchers and the State are necessary formalities," said Valgene Lehmann, regional game manager of the Texas Commission, "but actually most of these ranchers who are cooperating with us do little if any hunting. They are conservationists who are donating the use of their lands for the restoration of a form of wildlife that has been depleted in this section of the State."

As the deer stock increases on the ranches, Lehmann explained, the deer will probably spread out to adjacent areas.

There are about 3,800 white-tailed deer on the Aransas Refuge, Manager Stevenson estimates. Smaller than the Texas whitetail and larger than the Louisiana coast deer, the adult buck on the refuge is about 32 to 34 inches high at the shoulder and weighs between 110 and 140 pounds. The average adult female is between 29 and 32 inches high at the shoulders and weighs between 80 and 100 pounds.

Seventy-five traps have been set up to catch the big-game animals on the 55,000-acre refuge. The trapping is supervised by W. C. Glazener, biologist of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission in the southeast region of the State. Each portable trap has two compartments, a wired section and a boarded section. Bait is placed in the wired compartment to lure the animal into the trap.

When a deer enters a trap, the animal trips a wire and the front door drops. The animal usually moves forward to the second compartment to escape and again hits a trap wire. This time two doors drop, one at the rear and an intermediate door, thus confining the animal within the boarded compartment, where in a darkened crate it remains quiet. Each trap is visited twice daily.

Cottonseed cake is the bait that produces the best trapping results on the Texas Gulf Coast Refuge. Though mistletoe is the favorite deer bait on the Cape

Romain National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina and on the Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia, the Texas deer have not responded well to this food. Apples, peanuts, corn, milo maize, and oak and sweetbay browse have also been used as bait, but with little success.

Why the deer on the Texas refuges respond to cottonseed cake bait is not definitely known. Manager Stevenson points out that ranchers who graze cattle on the refuge put out these cakes for cattle during the winter, when there is a shortage of food on the range. "Perhaps the deer learned to eat cottonseed cake then," Stevenson said, "but I suspect the odor also has much to do with attracting the deer into the trap because we have caught fawns with this bait, and the fawns had not had an opportunity to learn to like this food."

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