



## Deer Associates eNews

News from the Deer Research Program at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

### How Many Feeder Sites Do You Need?

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Folks frequently tell me they are supplementally feeding their deer herd. Usually they mean feeding "protein pellets". If civility allows, I subsequently ask: "What is your acreage and how many feeder sites do you have?" Frequently, the answer tells me that the feeding is not intensive enough to make a population level improvement in antlers, fawn survival, or body weights.

Amount of feed delivered to a deer population depends on (1) whether feeding is seasonal or year-around, (2) the use of free-choice or timed feeders, and (3) feeder site density. What does CKWRI research reveal on these factors?

- Bob Zaiqlin study: One feeder/400 acres fed free choice and continuously resulted in increased fawn survival (only variable measured).
- Mark Bartoskewitz study: One feeder/845 acres fed free-choice and continuously resulted in 11 inch increase in antler size for bucks that ate feed. However, only 50% of bucks and 30% of does ate feed. Use of timed feeders at higher feeder density showed no feed effect.
- CKWRI study (in progress): One feeder/200 acres fed free-choice and continuously resulted in significantly higher rate of weight gain in fawns and yearlings.

#### Take-Home Management Guidelines

1. Minimum for a successful feeding program is one feeder site/500 acres fed free-choice.
2. Best results will be obtained with one feeder site/200 acres or less, fed free-choice.

#### Topics for Future Research

1. Does placing fence around feeding sites hamper use by fawns? Feed results could be affected by presence, size, and design of fencing around feeder sites. Most people use hog panels to exclude feral pigs and javelina. A circle using at least 11-12 panels is best.
2. Tube or trough-type feeders? Trough-types may deliver more feed but result in more waste from rain and non-target animals versus tube feeders.
3. Does water at feeder sites increase results? Drinking water in conjunction with eating dry protein pellets may help deer maintain water balance, which could influence feed intake.

4. Does feeding need to be year-around or can some pattern of seasonal feeding produce similar results?
5. What role does deer social behavior play in how much feed is consumed by individual deer? Does increasing feeder density reduce problems with deer being excluded from feeder sites by other deer?

