



Survival and Movements of Translocated White-tailed Deer in South Texas

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By Aaron Foley

The Trap, Transport, and Transplant (TTT) permit program for white-tailed deer has increased in popularity in Texas during the last several years. During 2004-2007, the number of deer trapped and relocated has increased from about 1,700 to >4,500. There are two general reasons for transporting deer: 1) controlling deer densities by either adding or removing deer, and 2) improving perceived deficiencies (e.g., antler size).

We monitored survival, movements, and body condition of 51 adult white-tailed deer from two translocations. One involved translocating both bucks and does from Webb County to a 5,000 acre ranch, partially enclosed by a high fence, in Calhoun County. The other was a 20 mile translocation of bucks within Kleberg County to a 5,000 acre pasture with no high fence.

Results

- Annual survival of all translocated deer was lower in the partially fenced property (64%) compared to the unfenced property (74%), but overall survival was similar to survival rates of adult native south Texas deer reported in previous studies (ca. 68-88%).
- As expected, more deer left the unfenced property (60%) than the partially enclosed property (15%).
- Cumulatively, 38% of deer survived and remained on the release area after 1 year.
- Over 80,000 acres would be needed to maintain 90% (18/20) of the surviving bucks in the low fenced release area.
- The median age of males that remained on the release area was lower (2.5) than the median age of males that left the low fenced release area (4.0)
- Young (1.5-3.5 years old) translocated males had below average antler gain and body condition 6-8 months post-release compared to resident males.

Take Home Message

Results of this study indicate reasonable survival rates can be achieved, but released deer may not remain in the vicinity of the release site and tend to have below-average body condition 6-8 months after release compared to native deer. Furthermore, bucks that dispersed from the release area tended to be older which can influence trophy deer management. The results of this study provide managers a basis for evaluating translocations as a tool to achieve management goals.

About the Author:

Aaron Foley is a Ph.D. student at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Under the guidance of Drs. Randy Deyoung and David Hewitt, Aaron is studying the factors that influence male white-tailed deer breeding success. For more information on Aaron, see the student highlight in this eblast issue.