



What Fawning Dates Mean to You

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If you've never thought about how important fawning dates are to managing deer, now is the time. Recent studies have shown that:

- Does in good body condition conceive earlier than does in poor condition.
- Earlier fawning dates produce larger and healthier offspring.
- A deer's fawning date directly correlates with his/her adult productivity.
- For bucks, earlier fawning dates translates to larger antlers and body size.

Earlier birth dates in many deer species result in larger and healthier offspring. These offspring often carry this advantage with them as they mature, resulting in more productive adult deer. In bucks, this translates to larger antlers and body sizes. One way to ensure does will breed as early as possible is to provide high quality foods, particularly high energy foods, during the month before and during the rut. This will ensure does are meeting their energy needs and will conceive as early as possible.

What CKWRI Research Found

Take Home Message: Conception depends on energy intake during the rut.

How a doe's body condition and food intake affect the reproductive cycle of white-tailed deer was the subject of a recent study at the CKWRI Captive Research Facility. The study showed that does in poor body condition eating poor quality food did not cycle. Within a week of being given high quality food, these does cycled despite their poor body condition. In contrast to does in good condition, however, many of the does that were initially in poor condition did not conceive until their second or third estrous. The delay in conceiving resulted in a delay in fawning of up to 2 months.

Other research suggests that the deer's energy status is of primary importance in determining if a doe will cycle. Protein does not seem to have as much influence. So, if a doe is meeting or exceeding her energy needs, she is likely to cycle. If she is in poor condition and not meeting her energy needs, she will not cycle.

Other Deer Research News

Take Home Message: Fawning dates are influenced by age and weight of the doe and by rainfall before and during the rut.

In areas of range overlap in west Texas, mule deer gave birth to fawns 1 month later than white-tailed deer. Older and heavier does of both species gave birth earlier. Greater rainfall before and during the rut also resulted in earlier birth dates. Rainfall during gestation did not have any

effect on birthdates. Greater rainfall before and during the rut probably produced high quality forage, resulting in a high quality diet and good body condition, and therefore earlier breeding.

Sources

Erin Monaco. 2004. The role of food intake on estrous cyclicity and reproductive potential in white-tailed deer. MS Thesis, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX.

Haskell et al. 2008. Factors affecting birth dates of sympatric deer in west-central Texas. *Journal of Mammalogy* 89:448-458.