

Don't let the drought get your deer down! Supplemental feed is going to play a huge role in the level of performance and antler development we have this fall due to the current drought situation. When looking at nutritional requirements for whitetail deer, it is important to remember that a lactating doe has the highest nutritional demand of any deer in the herd. It is also important to remember bucks deposit 67% of the mineral in their antlers during the last 30 days of antler development, which is directly ahead of us. Due to deer having to meet these higher nutritional demands and current range conditions, how they are fed now will ultimately be the determining factor in how they look this fall. Due to the drought and current range conditions deer are unable to even meet their minimum maintenance requirements in areas that typically have above average diversity in the habitat. We did have a huge mesquite bean crop throughout most of our area and this has carried a lot of deer that do not have supplemental feed available to where we are now, but for the most part this has played out. Nutrition available from native browse sources is extremely limited at best, so in order to keep your bucks from going into the fall with poor body condition, which will ultimately lead to increased mortality to post rut stress, supplementation is key.

Fawn recruitment is also going to be at an all time low, as parks and wildlife is predicting around a 10% fawn crop this year across the state. Heat stress and increased predation due to limited ground cover for fawns to hide in have been key factors in the amount of fawns we have this year. It's important to remember we also had a poor fawn crop two years prior and even though we had an exceptional one last year the amount of mature deer we will have to hunt in a couple of years will be limited to the amount of fawns we have raised. This is why it is so important to improve the nutritional plane available for all deer including fawns. Water is even more crucial for deer especially fawns during this time. Anything you can do to promote the number and quality of permanent water sources on your property will ultimately improve both deer herd health and how well it comes through the drought. With surface water sources disappearing every day, water accessibility is most often the main concern with fawns. They are typically unable to drink out of taller water troughs that have been established for livestock.

Many ranches with good supplemental feeding programs are seeing great antler development, body condition and above average fawn crops this year though despite the drought. They are able to do this by filling the nutritional gap that is missing due to current range conditions. Be sure to contact us at Jacobys if you have any questions about supplementation or would like to get an evaluation of your current feeding program to ensure you are meeting your deer's nutritional demands during these stressful conditions.

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