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Joe Crafton and Rick Snipes hunt bobwhite quail on Snipes' Stonewall County ranch. Photo from Joe Crafton.

Quail hunts tough, but improving

Test ranch for medicated feed showing results

By Craig Nyhus
LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

Joe Crafton is excited about medicated feed for quail.

Hunting on the Snipes Ranch near Aspermont, one of the test sites for Quail-Guard medicated feed, he said they averaged three large coveys per hour of hunting.

"Not as good as some years but much better than the reports I hear from other ranches in the Rolling Plains," he said.

But what he was most excited about was the lack of eyeworms in the birds harvested.

"I am not a scientist, but for the past four years this ranch has been part of the approved FDA test for medicated feed being conducted by Dr. Ron Kendall at Texas Tech Wildlife Toxicology Lab," Crafton

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Rut in various stages

Deer returning to feeders in many areas, on the move in South Texas

By Nate Skinner
FOR LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

Hunters across Texas are experiencing varying behaviors from white-tailed deer at the end of the season, now over

to a peak week or two of rut activity, and many folks have reported they just didn't experience it this year."

Cain believes that the cause of these reports has been the mild weather.

"Yes, we've had some decent cold fronts, especially here at the end of the season," he said. "However, the season has been full of mild weather, and I think that this lended deer movement to



Rolling Plains quail

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said. "Rick is using one feeder for every 300 acres and feeds (the medicated feed) only two times per year (in March and in early fall)."

Based on his first-hand observations, Crafton feels the medicated feed is working.

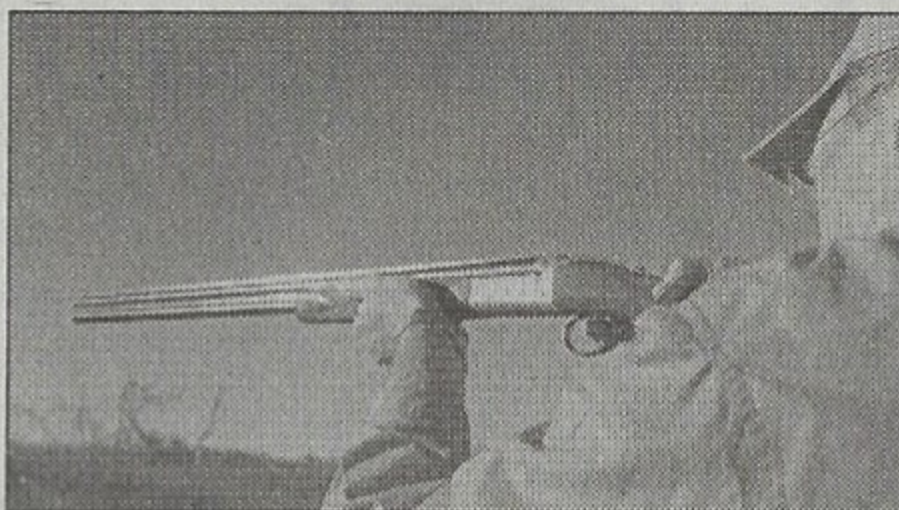


Photo from Joe Crafton

"Before the test, 70 percent of the birds I harvested in 2017 had visible eyeworms — they had very high levels of infection. Yesterday, I checked nine birds and only one had one visible eyeworm."

Awaiting approval for the medicated feed from the Federal Drug Administration has been a long process, now going on six years. Dr. Kendall's staff is documenting the findings to support the application to the FDA.

Snipes said he estimates the ranch has about three times the numbers of birds it had last year.

"On one of our all-day hunts we pointed six coveys in the morning and nine that afternoon, with a three-hour break for lunch and naps," he said. "Our harvest so far has been 90 percent juveniles."

Dr. Dale Rollins, executive director of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch, said in his monthly newsletter there is some more "good" news on the quail front.

"Our November helicopter counts were up 15 percent and our trapping-banding effort showed a 20 percent increase," he said.

While hunting reports from the Rolling Plains weren't great, a good rainfall year could help the numbers rebound.

At the Matador Wildlife Management Area, Manager Chip Ruthven said hunters with good dogs have been "pleasantly surprised."

"The better reports have been seven to eight coveys a day," he said. "Hunters are averaging about half a bird per day, which is close to double from last year."

In Fisher County, Paul Melton said this season has been an improvement from last year, saying bird numbers are 35 to 40 percent higher.

"I hunt almost exclusively in the last 2.5 hours of the afternoon," Melton said. "I am finding three to five coveys per hour, and covey size is larger than I anticipated."