

on whitetail deer feed, added to technology upgrades, has helped cement the business' crucial position in South Texas agri-business.

DF&G owners Mac Wilmeth, Phillip Collier and Surles take pride in their choice to source local products for their feed. Jason describes a significant shift from beef cattle to an emerging market that is whitetail hunting.

"Our founders worked with beef cattle ranch accounts that had been decades of cow/calf stockers and some of those managers quickly realized whitetail was a real

opportunity," he says of the decision to capitalize on whitetail feed. "We use Gary Boyd farms, Mimosa farms, Tech farms for their corn, milo and peanuts.

"One of the reasons we use local grains is because it is cheaper on the freight end,"

Jason adds, "and the majority of our ownership are the producers."

The mill produces 90 tons a day of bagged wildlife feed and 90 tons a day of bulk feed.

"We are taking locally sourced ingredients and turning them into a value-added product, a protein pellet," he says.

DFG sells its brand, Venado and RHR that are protein-rich supplemental feeds for whitetail. Additionally, the company sells one non-house brand, Double Down Deer Feed.

Surles says his team helped formulate the

feed with the non-house brand founders.

"We made deer feed before there was deer feed."

Creating the marketable feed is a complex process in which skill is gained through the mill's long experience in supplying local farms and ranches. Cotton seed is crushed

and the meal is a secondary product; oil is the primary product good because it is high

"We are taking locally sourced ingredients and turning them into a value-added product.."



in protein and fat. Peanuts, for which the Dilley area is well known, are recognized as being significantly high in protein.

Present conditions in the region, however, have affected the company's operations.

"Drought-wise, it has been hard on us," Jason says. "The bonus is that we sell more feed, but the drawback is that our producers produce less grain."

Inside the mill, technology and modernization abound. A robot is deployed to stack feed; and part of the larger expansion is a bagging line parallel to the new feed system. The equipment did not replace any jobs at the mill but made the

operation more efficient, Jason says. There are now four drivers for delivering bulk feed and two for delivering bagged food. Deliveries are made to ranches and retailers across the region.

"We still sell feed for cattle," Jason says. "Fifteen years ago, we moved eighty percent of our feed for cattle and twenty for wildlife. Those numbers are now flip-flopped. That's a sign of where agri-business is going."

Those high-protein peanuts gave operators an idea, Jason says, as observers had reported that the highest-scoring deer in the area all had access to local peanut sources.

"That gave us the idea to use peanuts as a key ingredient in our deer feed," he says. "They are super high in protein and fat and extremely high in total digestive nutrients."

The company plans on expanding its mixing capabilities and adding a pellet mill line.

"Our current focus right now is production and growing our dealer network," Jason says. "We want to build a new warehouse and adjacent retail space."

The DF&G customer base ranges from local hunting leases to family and commercial operations. The majority of the company's business is within a 150-mile radius of Frio County.

