

It's a game changer

Feeding whitetail throughout the year

BREYANA SEGURA

With record high temperatures leading to exceptional drought conditions and natural water sources drying up, ranchers in South Texas have weighed heavily on supplemental feeding for the upcoming whitetail season.

"Dove season was slow this year," Celeste Lacy of the SMR ranch says. "I think it's because it hasn't been cold



A buck harvested on a ranch outside of Dilley that had been feed with protein pellets manufactured by Dilley Feed and Grain.



enough to push the birds down. Others think it's because of the drought."

Local landowners agree that both are contributing factors.

Providing a year-round source of nutrition for whitetail population is very important, especially this year.

The drought has placed stress on plants and water sources, affecting whitetail deer directly by decreasing their body fat and not providing buck or doe with the proper nutrients needed to recover after the rut.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists believe the statistic may be tipping downwards this year with the lingering drought conditions and the possibility of increased fawn mortality.

Jason Surles, co-owner of Dilley Feed & Grain, believes

that the 2022-23 whitetail season should be an excellent one.

"Obviously it is dependent on range conditions, forbs and browsing availability," the local feed storeowner says. "But if people fed correctly and did proper deer management practices, the deer should be lights out."

Surles and his team have formulated two types of deer supplemental protein feed that is used by ranchers throughout South Texas.

"The saying goes, you will have a better year in drought years than green years because deer have no other choice than to keep their head in those feeders," he says. "We try to make a quality feed but cannot mimic what Mother Nature does."

Although the feed mill owner

stands behind the quality of the company's protein pellets that have shown proven results by producing top-notch bucks, he does believe that feed alone will not grow good deer, and that those results also depend on management practices coupled with Mother Nature cooperating.

"There is no magic in a bag," he says.

Ranch management should supplement the herd all year to ensure the whitetails receive everything they need to flourish, he adds, and it is important to stay committed to supplemental feeding to see noticeable results.

"Supplemental feeding is extremely important during the lactation curve of the does when they are dropping fawn," he says. "They need the

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heart rate causing the venom to spread.

- Don't cut the wound.
- Don't try and suck the venom from the wound.
- Don't use a tourniquet or apply ice or water.
- Once bitten, the venom takes seconds to travel from the rattlesnake's retractable fangs, through a person's skin and into their bloodstream.
- It is ideal to seek medical attention within 30 minutes of being bitten. Left untreated, the bite may result in severe organ damage or death.

