

Quarterly News Letter

Winter 2008



I hope this finds you doing well, and your aquatic and upland habitats are progressing towards your management goals or maintaining a quality state. Hunting season is in full swing and I hope you have found time to enjoy the fruits of your time, labor and money spent to create quality natural environments.

It has been a busy summer. We have added clients in the state of Alabama and working with Westervelt Wildlife Services to manage their aquatic resources. We are assisting Dr. Tim Gross with a multi-year study collecting fish, vegetation, sediment and water chemistry data from the St. Johns River to document any changes as a result of the modifications taking place at the Georgia Pacific paper mill in Palatka, Florida. I now participate in a weekly segment on the Outdoors Show radio show and outdoorsshow.com web site from Jacksonville, Florida, providing weekly lake and land management tips.

This quarter's news letter will focus on supplemental feeding for fish and deer, which can be beneficial for both. A supplemental feeding strategy should be designed to help you achieve your management goals and fit your budget. Goals range from attracting any fish and deer to growing as many large fish or bucks as possible!

Fish Feeding

Supplemental fish feeding in recreational ponds should be done when water temperatures are above 55° F. Only in Aquaculture settings is year-around feeding necessary. Fish feed vary in nutritional makeup, pellet size and floating/non-floating varieties. For a newly stocked pond use "grow-out" or fingerling size feed for catfish and bream the first six to eight months. This feed is smaller in diameter so small fish can consume, and has higher protein levels for accelerated growth. Once fish become large enough, a standard size pellet feed may be used. Floating feed is best in warmer temperatures and sinking in colder months. Feed prices vary greatly depending on the amount and brand of feed used. Generally the higher the protein content the more expensive the feed.

One or two automatic (directional or scatter) feeders per five acres are plenty to either attract or accelerate growth in fish. Automatic feeder prices range from \$150-\$700. I recommend using 12 volt with a solar panel. Maintained properly these can last many years with minimal maintenance. During spring and fall set feeders to dispense four times per day, approximately 0.75 lbs per broadcast for a five acre lake with two feeders if accelerating growth is desired. If only used to attract fish lesser amounts can be dispensed. During hot summer months (water temperature above 90° F) feed twice per day at dawn and dusk 1.0-1.25 lbs per feeding. To calculate feed amounts dispensed, hold a bucket or heavy plastic bag under or in front (depending on the type) of the

feeder to collect all feed when a “Test Run” is performed, then weigh the feed. Once water temperatures get below 55° F feeding can stop and any needed maintenance (winterize) can be performed. At any time if food is not consumed within 20 minutes of being dispensed, reduce the time feed is being broadcast. This reduces excess nutrients and feed waste.

Deer Feeding

Feeding deer has been a long time practice to attract deer into bow or gun range. Recently it has been used to grow larger antlers. This practice started west, and has been getting attention in the east. Protein feeding is completely different than feeding as an attractant. Like fish feed, deer feed prices greatly range due to content and manufacturer. Deer feeding can be done by automatic, gravity or trough feeders. Feeders range from \$35 (homemade trough) to over \$1,000. Troughs usually get unwanted visitors such as squirrels, raccoons etc. and excess moisture in them, where the other types can be guarded against these pests. Hogs, bears and livestock are other animals that can disturb/destroy feeders and need to be considered when choosing deer feeder types.

When feeding as an attractant, begin feeding approximately four to six weeks before the season opens. Spread feed out wider than the feeder can on occasions in the beginning to get nearby deer’s attention. Generally corn is the cheapest deer feed. Local farmers can be a great source for deer feed (its cheaper and local - so deer can identify it) if you can move and store bulk loads. To provide a variety, mixing two-or-three feed types makes the feed even more appealing to more deer in the area. When using broadcast feeders, dispense twice per day when hunters are on the stand. Having feed broadcast before daylight may make for undesirable deer/hunter interaction. Generally, feed one hour after sunrise and two hours before sunset.

When feeding for antler growth (protein feeding) begin feeding by the conclusion of the current hunting season. This helps bucks begin building fat reserves lost during and after the rut, well before antler growth begins for next year. The more nutritional needs that are satisfied for the body the more that can be expended on antler growth. This feeding also helps does through fetus development and milk producing times. A protein feed program that is started in May, June or July is less beneficial. When starting out, mixing with a less nutritional known attractant may be necessary to get deer to begin eating commercial protein pellets. Once this program is begun it must be carried out through August or September. After August each year switch to an “attractant” less expensive feed to keep animals coming back. Most protein programs use troughs or gravity feeders to help reduce feed waste.

There are many feed brands on the market, check the internet and local feed stores for nutritional values, availability and price. Always keep feed in a cool dry place and never use moldy feed, as some molds are toxic to fish and mammals. If you are interested in obtaining additional information on feeders, please contact me and I will be happy to provide you with literature on brands and models I recommend to my clients.

My other advice is when feeding or with food plots, set deer stands for trophy bucks 100-200 yards away from food sources in thicker cover. I am a firm believer that big bucks rarely visit plots or feeders during daylight hours (except during the rut) if any hunting pressure is applied at all.

Please check your state's regulations prior to feeding and hunting, as all states have different rules on baiting or feeding white tail deer.

Additional Management Resources

I wanted to make you aware of a few nice resources for fish & wildlife management available on the web that I use.

- Westervelt Wildlife Services Management Calendars (<http://www.westerveltwildlife.com/content/view/108/208/>)
- Pond Boss Magazine (<http://www.pondboss.com/index.html>)
- Wildlife Trends (<http://wildlifetrends.com/index.cfm>)

I will be making my fall site visits in Florida, Georgia and Alabama the middle of September or the beginning of October. I will be contacting you in early to mid September to set up your individual appointments. Please have any potential new clients contact me ASAP, so I can include them for site visits this fall. The best time to electrofish a lake or pond is spring or fall!

I hope you find these News Letters informative and your feed back is always welcome for suggested topics and upcoming events that readers may be interested in attending. Anyone with great fish or game pictures please submit them and maybe we can start including them in the Quarterly News Letter. I also post all Quarterly News Letters on the [company web site](#) if you would like to observe past editions or forward it to a friend. If you wish to be removed from this mailing list please E-Mail me and you will stop receiving these.

Have a safe and enjoyable hunting season!

Scott G. Brown