



IF YOU THINK THAT DEER DON'T EAT HAY this picture will prove you as wrong as can be. It was taken some years ago by Wes Guderian at the Lost River Ranch at the request of the late Dan Liskey. Two long strings of flash bulbs and photographic lights were strung around the

haystack and Wes took up station in the loft of a nearby barn. The picture is reproduced here through the courtesy of Cecil Edwards, executive secretary of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. It was carried earlier this year in that publication along with a story on deer damage.

Deer Population In West Staging Big Gains; Seek Workable Control Methods

Oregon and California face a much more serious deer problem than the simple reconciliation of attitudes between private landowners and sportsmen.

There are too many deer and their steadily increasing numbers are causing concern to landowners and game management officials alike. Oregon's estimated deer population is 700,000, but state game commission officials call that a "guestimate."

Joe Smith, Klamath County's member of the commission and operator of a registered Angus herd on his 8,000-acre ranch which straddles the state line, says the deer population is at the highest point since the white man came West. He quotes the journals of John C. Fremont, who led U.S. troops into this area more than 100 years ago and found insufficient numbers of elk and deer to feed his men. Actual tracks across Fremont's old battlegrounds last winter showed that more than 14,000 deer had crossed from Modoc County into Oregon. It is pointed out by game management officials that more deer have been killed in the area than the track count shows to exist during some seasons.

Successive mild winters in the high desert country have aided natural breeding and permitted a high percentage of survival.

Haystack damage is a fall problem but the deer feed on privately owned land all year around.

"Basically, a deer is a browse feeder," it is pointed out by Ray O. Petersen, Klamath County extension agent. "However, he supplements his diet with clover, alfalfa and tame grasses on ranch pastures and leased range land paid for by the livestock operators."

"It is a common sight to see a dozen to 50 deer scattered out through a field, grazing with the cattle. An even greater number are seldom seen as they feed early and late in the day."

"Most of the ranchers just live with the problem as a way of life. They know they are supporting the deer, especially in the fall when natural water supplies have dried up and the deer drift down from the hills."

Range management specialists with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service figure a ratio of five sheep to one cow and about two deer to one cow in estimating the

carrying capacity of pasture and range land.

Don Baldwin, SCS specialist here, points out that a deer's diet must have protein and carbohydrates in balance, hence a deer is a heavy user of brush. Locally, their favorites are bitterbrush, birchleaf mahogany, service berry, Klamath plum and snowberry. About six weeks is as long as a deer can survive on hay alone, he adds.

"They get a good deal of enjoyment from cultivated grasses and legumes in the spring and summer, however," Baldwin said. "We had to put up deer-tight fences around experimental plots on Klamath Marsh in order to collect any data. The deer came down and grazed them down to the ground."

The same situation was encountered in July by Petersen when he was assisting D. O. (Hawk) Hyde on the Bar-Y Ranch on Upper Williamson River with fertilizer trials on fields. The cattle were held off the trial areas but the deer grazed off the fertilized plots and left the other pasture pretty well alone.

Dan Eastman, federal game management agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service here, has a thick file on ranches throughout Klamath County where deer damage to both green and dry hay is heavy.

He has had no requests for special permits to kill offending animals but his department cooperates with the game commission in providing spray materials to make plants unpalatable to animals. The landowners must apply the spray solutions themselves and sprays are used chiefly for protection to orchards and truck garden crops, he said.

The Oregon State Game Commission is making a sincere effort to keep the deer population in balance, according to John McKean of the commission's Portland office.

Last year, the commission issued 117,000 permits for special unit hunts and has increased the number to 125,000 for this year.

"The Silver Lake unit, in north Lake County, for example, was opened to those holding special permits only last year," he said. "This year, 4,000 special permits are available for antlerless deer, but the holders of regular deer tags can go in and take their bucks, as well."

In 1958, a total of 233,855 deer tags was sold in Oregon. The number increased to 247,569 in 1959 and an even greater number are expected to be purchased this year. Last year, more than 146,000 deer were harvested in the fall season. It is anticipated the number may increase to 150,000 this year.

McKean outlined some of the helps available from the Oregon State Game Commission.

"Last year, we had requests from 39 ranchers to furnish haystack panels and sent out 1,026 panels. Our records show that there are more than 33,000 panels in use in the state now. We have new ones; 16 feet in length, re-

placing the old 7x8-foot ones.

"We loan woven wire tree cages to assist ranchers in getting trees started, whether they are ornamental or orchard type. We have 3,000 tree cages out in the state now."

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