

## Deer Behavior

During July 2009, the Quality Deer Management Association held its national convention in Louisville, Kentucky. As passionate deer hunters, the “highlights” listed below from ongoing research projects on the King Ranch in South Texas might help us in our annual quest to tag an older buck each year. These tidbits of information are the preliminary results of DNA and radio-telemetry research conducted on parts of the ranch.

- The average home range for 20 bucks of all ages wearing GPS radio-collars varied from 2,271 acres in 2006-07 to 3,654 acres in 2007-08.
- The average daily movement for all bucks during the rut (Nov.25-Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>) was 6-8 miles per day. This doesn't necessarily mean a linear distance of this magnitude, it simply means bucks were on their feet and traveling this distance each day. There was also a very wide variation between individual bucks, with some not moving much at all and others traveling unbelievable distances. No clear movement pattern attributable to age was determined, as each deer exhibited a very diverse and unique behavior or pattern.
- Approximately 23.5% of all twin and triplet fawns born exhibited multiple paternity. In other words, at least two different bucks were responsible for fathering offspring in those pregnancies.
- Even in herds that have a high proportion of older aged males (3.5 or older), 1.5 and 2.5 year old bucks still do a significant part of breeding.

<u>Buck Age</u>	<u>% of Total Buck Population</u>	<u>% of Breeding Done</u>
1.5	23	14
2.5	20	16
3.5+	57	70

What do we learn from this? We've all sat around a campfire and heard other hunters exclaim something like this: “Those big ol' bucks whip those little bucks off and breed all the does themselves.” This certainly isn't true. Common sense tells us that if any given buck is with a doe, he can't at the same time be running around whipping every other buck in the woods. Even if a given population has as high of a percentage of older mature bucks as the one listed above, younger bucks will not be constantly driven off and prevented from breeding. For more education on white-tailed deer behavior, please visit the QDMA at their web site.