



## TTHA FIELD PRO STAFF NOTEBOOK

### 1. Hunting conditions in the field:

As the 2009–10 season comes to a close, I am seeing the deer in good shape compared to previous years. Thanks to the abundance of fall and continued moisture, most of the bucks are coming out of the rut in great condition. This should help increase the odds of having better antler quality for the next year if we can sustain any type of regular moisture pattern. The antler quality for the previous year was better than I expected considering the dry spells we experienced in 2009. Antler breakage was less than normal. Fawn survival looked above 100% due to supplemental feeding, sustained herd numbers, and predator control. Our hunters had a successful year, but we did have to hunt hard due to the abundance of available food.

I visited with friends that hunted and outfitters in British Columbia and Alberta and there deer season was not very productive this year. Due to a warm spell that started during the first week of the season and continued throughout, not many mature bucks were seen. This is good news for folks planning on returning or going on a hunt up there next year, granted that they do not have a major die-off this winter.

### 2. Hunting Tips:

**Pop-up blinds and tailgate feeders:** With limited deer movement, I have thrown up a pop-up blind and corned a section of road with a tailgate feeder. After a few days I have been able to draw out new and different deer that I may have not seen before.

**Mid-day hunts:** During our doe hunts the morning and evening movement was really slow. We tried sitting out from 10–2, a couple of days, in hopes of catching some midday movement. We did have some success, but it was not as good as I had expected. I think the main reason was too much available native food in the pasture.

### 3. Any new gear that caught your eye and why:

I have been using a pair of Nikon Monarch 12x56 ATB binoculars. I have been impressed with the light gathering capability in the early morning and late evenings. With the lack of deer movement this year, these times have been critical and these binoculars have really helped. For the price, they off a good alternative to the really expensive models.



#### **4. Stories from the field:**

**I guided a hunter this year and he had to make a quick shot on a rutting buck that was in hot pursuit of a doe. I stopped the buck and he was quartered to us when he shot. I didn't have time to get the camera or binoculars on the deer when he shot. I heard the impact of the hit and the hunter said he saw the buck kick. Not being sure of where he was hit, we waited for 30 minutes and went to go look for the deer. The hunter stated that he was aiming at the shoulder so I thought the shot might have been too far back. We found no blood, hair, meat or bone where the deer was standing at the time of the shot. I finally found a blood trail 40 yards away and tracked the faint blood trail for 200 yards. We went and ate breakfast and returned later to continue tracking. After another 400 yards we ran out of blood. Sensing the direction the deer was headed, we started just walking and scanning looking for a wounded or dead deer. On our third scan, and six hours after the shot, we found the deer dead 200 yards from the last blood sign. He had been hit low back in the abdomen and the bullet had re-exited the abdomen and entered the opposite lower hindquarter. I learned from this experience to never rush a shot, never assume where you think an animal has been hit, use every possible clue to help recover the animal, never give up until you are 100% sure the animal can not be recovered, and maybe I need to invest in a good tracking dog.**

#### **5. Trends, news or legislation**

**I continue to hear the word "feral hog" in conversations as they quickly spread to ranches across the western edge of the Hill Country. This is a problem we need to address and control. They offer us another game animal that we can hunt, but I have quickly learned that they are more of a problem than they are worth. They are also one of the smartest animals that I have had to hunt.**

#### **6. Miscellaneous:**

**I am glad 2009 is gone and am excited about the year 2010 that lies ahead. I hope we all have a Happy and Prosperous New Year!**