

SPOTLIGHT SURVEYS FOR DEER

Spotlight surveys are commonly used to estimate the deer density on ranches. They are one of the most reliable deer survey techniques and, therefore, should be utilized when possible.

A spotlight survey is conducted by first establishing a chosen route. This route can be from 2 to 15 miles in length. The chosen route will be conducted 3 times annually and in precisely the same manner; therefore, a number of considerations must be made. Will the route be passable during wet years? Does the route adequately cover the deer habitat on the ranch? Will the data be biased by excluding areas of the ranch with lower deer populations? If you need help establishing a route please contact your Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist so that we can set it up properly.

A survey is conducted with a driver and two observers. The survey should begin no earlier than 30 minutes after sunset and should be driven slowly (4-8 mph) so all deer can be seen. The driver is responsible for following the designated route and recording observations. Data forms have the route divided by miles and deer observed are recorded by the mile in which they are observed. The observers, using spotlights and riding on the back of the pickup, are responsible for observations on their side of the vehicle. An attempt should be made to determine Buck, Doe, or Fawn. If the deer runs off or is not in a position that you can get a positive ID, record deer as undetermined. Don't Guess!

During the first survey a Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist will estimate visibility for the line. The visibility is determined by estimating how far a deer could be seen at right angles to the vehicle every tenth of a mile. The maximum distance that can be estimated is 250 yards on either side. This estimate is used to calculate the acres of visibility on the route. The deer density is determined by dividing the acres of visibility by the number of deer observed. The visibility of the line is taken only once unless major changes occur along the route that affects the distance deer can be seen.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING SPOTLIGHT SURVEYS

1. Surveys must be conducted at least 3 times between August 1 and September 1.
2. The **exact same route** must be conducted each year.
3. Always call the Sheriff's office and game warden before beginning each count.
4. Surveys should not be conducted on consecutive nights when avoidable.

PLEASE TOTAL ALL COLUMNS AT THE BOTTOM!!!

Submit data by September 1st to: Return to Coop president

