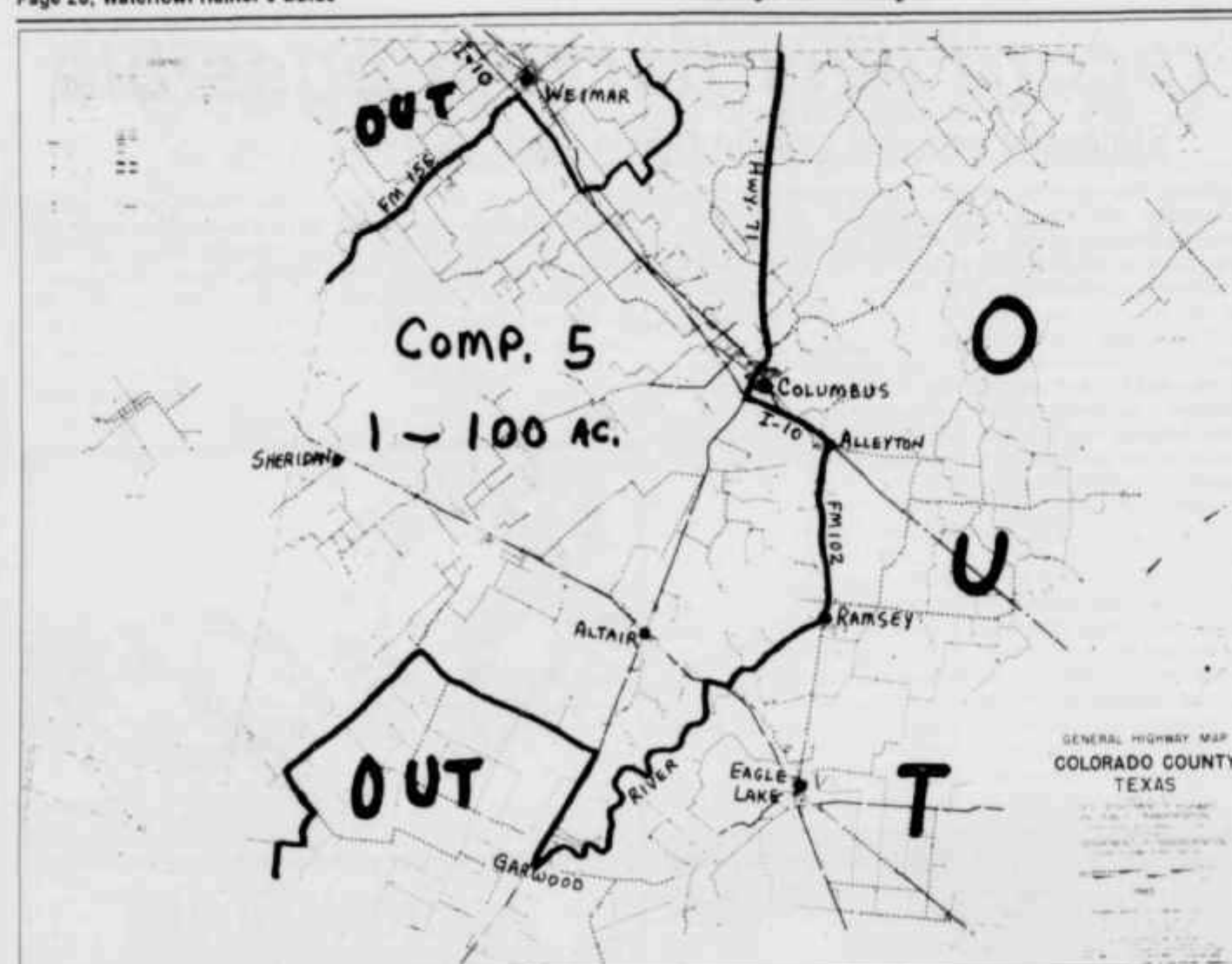




Antlerless deer permits to be issued November 14

Colorado County will have an either sex deer season for the 1987-88 hunting season. The either sex system provides an opportunity for all landowners in the antlerless deer hunting compartment to harvest doe deer. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recommends a harvest rate of one doe per 80 acres. Landowners should give consideration to the number of does they feel need to be harvested on their property using the Department's recommended rate as a guide. Permits will be issued only to landowners or their designated agents. A letter from the landowner will be required if he allows someone else to pick up the permits. Permits will be issued at the Colorado County Courthouse in Columbus from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on November 13.

Prairie Edge Museum Open Weekends

Prairie Edge Museum, corner of East Main Street at North Lake Avenue, is open from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. For a special tour, call Bill Harrison Sr. at 234-2662.

Prairie Edge offers many interesting items that tell the history of Eagle Lake and the surrounding areas. It also offers souvenirs at the gift shop.

Make plans to visit the museum while you are in town.

Sighting in before the hunt

It's early morning and you're only a few hundred yards from camp on opening day. A movement catches your eye and there, moving slowly through the trees and shadows, is the big buck you've been looking for all your life. You sit down, get a good rest and squeeze off a careful shot. The deer kicks into high gear and you have time for only one more hurried shot before it disappears. You missed. Reaction sets in; wonder, disappointment, dismay, slowly subsiding excitement. Later, back at camp, you find a good excuse. A check shows the rifle is shooting 18 inches high.

Right now, before the hunting season, is the time to sight in your rifle, advise the experts at the Remington Arms Company. Here are a number of Remington tips for best results.

Do your sighting-in at a developed shooting range if you can. There are experts there to help you with any problems and the distances are accurately measured.

Before you fire, run several dry patches through your rifle barrel. This is a safety measure, since congealed oil or grease remaining in the barrel from storage could cause excessive pressures and a potentially dangerous situation.

Sighting-in is a test of how accurately the rifle is shooting, not a measure of your personal shooting ability, so always use a rest beneath the fore-end and the butt stock, to provide as steady and consistent a hold as possible.

Fore-end rests should be soft and resilient enough to simulate the "give" of your hand. All rifles produce a certain amount of barrel whip or vibration that will cause them to shoot high when rested on a hard, solid surface. If you sight in that way, the rifle will invariably shoot low when you are using only your hand for a support.

Begin by firing two shots for reference on the target, preferably at 25 yards. Make any adjustments that are necessary, then fire a three-shot group, using the center of the group to make any finer adjustments. Finally, fire a three-shot group at 100 yards. Wait a few minutes between each group, to

allow the barrel to cool; this also helps to restore your own concentration.

All Remington firearms and ammunition catalogs contain a section showing trajectory figures for a tremendous selection of calibers and bullet weights. Referring to this, it's easy to see where your rifle will hit at various yardages when you sight it in at a given range.

If you usually hang in thick cover, a rifle zeroed in at 100 yards will probably suffice. If you hunt in open country where long shots are possible, you'll want the zero point of impact at 200 or more yards.

Let's suppose you shoot a 30-06 with 150 grain bullets (always use the same bullets to sight in as you will on the hunt - different bullet weights will change your point of impact). If you sight in so the rifle is zeroed at 200 yards, your bullets will be 2.1 inches high at 100 yards, 3.3 inches low at 250 and 8.5 inches low at 300 yards.

It's a good idea to copy down the trajectory numbers that apply to your ammunition and tape them to your gun stock, so they'll be handy when you need them in the field. If you can't get to a formal range to do your sighting in, the folks at Remington suggest you be sure the spot you choose has a good backdrop of soft dirt or sand. Pace off yardages as accurately as possible and always clean up boxes, targets, empty shells, etc. before you leave.

Take some time before the hunt to be sure the rifle is shooting where you aim it and this year that big buck may be yours.

Deer predictions

trophies," said Williams. "Although our final counts are not tabulated, it appears that South Texas has an incredible buck/doe ratio this year. We saw almost as many bucks as does."

Williams said antler development apparently benefited from timely rainfall in late winter and early spring, which is the critical antler-growing period. "The range is in wonderful shape, even better than last year, and the deer have had an excellent fawn crop."

Unusually lush range conditions may hamper hunter success, at least early in the season. Biologist Ernie Davis of Cotulla said last year's record harvest of 83,800 deer in South Texas may be matched this year if hunters continue to take more antlerless deer under the either-sex system. "There are enough deer out there to set another record, but a lot depends on the weather and the hunters," said Davis.

Pinewoods

The East Texas Pinewoods possesses the fastest-growing white-tailed deer herd of all the state's ecological regions. This trend was reflected in a record harvest of 41,300 bucks and 18,400 antlerless deer last year. Biologist Gary Spencer of Jasper said the potential exists for the region to produce yet another all-time record harvest in 1987-88. "Conditions have been excellent, and the deer population continues to climb," said Spencer. "Hunters may have even better success this year because there are so many deer, and also because we certainly are not going to have the bumper acorn crop we had last year." Spencer said hunters harvested the record number of deer in spite of lush habitat conditions and abundant acorns — factors that usually reduce deer movement. He added that body condition of deer is good this year, and range conditions for antler development were favorable. "I'm sure we will see some good bucks in areas where there are enough animals in the older age classes," Spencer said.

Gulf Prairies and Marshes (Oak Prairie)

This is an area of relatively small pockets of deer habitat along the state's Coastal Prairie, which includes Colorado County. Deer populations and hunting success probably vary less here than in most ecological regions, according to Don Frels of Rockport, regional wildlife director. "Hunter success depends heavily on the amount of vegetation, and this year may be a lot like last year, in that the thick vegetation cut down on deer movement during the hunting season," said Frels. Although the age structure of bucks is young because of high hunting pressure, this year's crop of bucks should have better than average antlers, Frels said.

Cross Timbers and Prairies and Rolling Plains These ecological regions are roughly bounded by Fort Worth westward to the eastern Panhandle, southward to San Angelo and eastward back to Interstate Highway 35. Normally the region's wide variations in habitat make predicting hunting success difficult. However, biologist Larry Holland of Brownwood said prospects are extremely good throughout the region for the second straight year. "We had a record harvest of 34,500 deer last year, and I would have to say conditions look even better this year, both for numbers of deer and antler development," Holland said.

Ample rainfall in the spring brought on a "great" fawn crop and good survival, Holland said. The rains even hit the often-dry Permian Basin region north and west of San Angelo, where range conditions currently are very good, he said. Hunters may notice reduced deer movement in the lush habitat, but Holland believes the animals still will respond to feeders. "What the harvest will be is anybody's guess," said Holland, "but if weather cooperates and hunters take ad-

vantage of the either-sex regulations to take more antlerless deer, we should have another good harvest."

Biologist Tim Bone of Alpine said mule deer populations appear to be continuing their gradual growth pattern of the past several years. "We have had unusual weather conditions for this part of

the state," Bone said. "It has rained all year long, and the habitat is in great shape." Bone said mule deer are in very good body condition, and antler development appears to be somewhat better than last year. Bone added that if enough hunters get into the field, last year's harvest of 3,200 mule deer could be equaled or exceeded this season.



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