

*This recent email exchange between Jarret Guill of the Cobweb Ranch and Macy Ledbetter, a private South Texas wildlife management consultant, is reprinted here with BCWMA's thanks and with the permission of both.*

**Jarret writes to Macy,**

I researched fawning timelines in an effort to work with our landowner to reduce fawn mortality due to mowing. I'd like to create a simple recommendation so the BCWMA could educate our members, especially on wet years like this year when lots of hay and field shredding is occurring. Can you please review the timelines below and provide suggestions/recommendations.

First estrus(same as main rut) in Beeville : ~11/26

Second estrus for does not bred in late Nov is 28 days later, ~ 12/24

Gestation is 200 days(6-7 months) depending on habitat conditions

Fawns start dropping around 05/25 and extend to 06/24 for first estrus, peaks on 06/09

Fawns start dropping around 06/22 and extend to 07/22 for second estrus, peaks on 07/07

Fawns hide in tall grass and are fairly stationary for 4 weeks after birth

4-6 weeks after birth, fawns start shadowing their mother and mobile

Hay and field shredding should be avoided if possible from May 25th to August 4th. A simple rule might be to avoid shredding in June and July?

Turkey and quail nesting seems to start even earlier in May and any guidance there is also appreciated.

**And Macy's response**

Yes sir, your dates are pretty accurate, good job. The Bee Co. primary rut is a little earlier than you mention but overall, the dates are accurate.

Yes, avoid all shredding for June and July, except perhaps the ranch roads (not edges, only roads) to prevent catalytic converter fires once the grass dries out. Turkey in particular like to nest along ranch road edges so don't mow the roads real wide, just mow the middle tall grass growing between the tire tracks if you have to for safety sake and radiator seedhead prevention (a good problem to have this year!)

Quail are nesting right now and the fawns are just showing up. Peak quail rearing is late June and early July. Last weekend I saw baby quail in Jim Wells County. They were only able to flush into the nearest brush and could not yet fly well at all, they were about 2.5-3" tall.

Cutting and baling hay is a timing issue and it usually is in direct conflict with fawning. Many fawns meet their demise in a cutter or bailer. Flushing bars mounted in front of the machinery certainly help but not perfect. Waiting as late as possible to cut and bale is the best idea but of course, scope of work and weather conditions have more to do with it than anything else. Cutting and baling at night also helps to reduce fawn encounters as the doe is able to possibly move the fawn and/or the fawn can escape with some security cover from predation. During the day, the fawn will simply lay still and let you run over it and rarely will the doe try to move it. If you do encounter a fawn while cutting, simply relocate it to the nearest shade and protection (big tree, fenceline, field edge/corner) and don't take it home with you. The doe will return when the disturbance ceases and provided the fawn can survive missing one or two feeding times, it has a chance of survival. Fawns feed every four hours and around the clock, so dehydration is a real issue as the temperatures increase. Handling the fawn will not prevent the doe from accepting the fawn, maternal instincts over-ride that old wives' tale.

There is a neat turkey research project going on right now in the hill country. Of the 15 radio collared hen turkeys, 12 hens selected ranch road edges as nest sites. Of the 12 road side nests, all were successfully hatched but only one clutch was destroyed by predation, all others appear to be surviving so far. The other nests in the pasture have not enjoyed such success, thus the need to NOT mow all the ranch roads at the moment.

With the tall grass -- concealment/insects/seeds, all chicks have a good chance of survival this summer. Mowing removes all of those favorable conditions, opens up visibility, travel routes and access for predators at just the "wrong" time. Leave the shredder in the barn for another month.

Instead of mowing, set out snares, fill protein feeders, repair water troughs, clear brush off the tank dams, set out coon traps near feeders, spot spray regrowth mesquite and huisache, spray the fencelines, clean out the cattleguards, repair fences, and make final plans for the fall deer survey effort. But keep the tractor in the barn.

Hope this helps,