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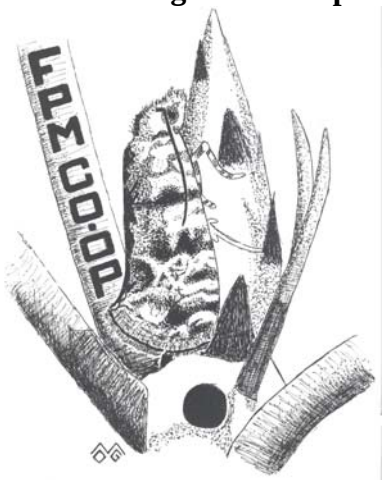
Quarterly Newsletter on Forest Pest Management Issues

Forest Pest Management Cooperative



Nantucket Pine Tip Moth, *Rhyacionia frustrana* (Comstock)

Texas Forest Service, Forest Pest Management,
P.O. Box 310, Lufkin, Texas 75902-0310

PEST is a quarterly newsletter that provides up-to-date information on existing forest pest problems, exotic pests, new pest management technology, and current pesticide registrations in pine seed orchards and plantations. The newsletter focuses on, but is not limited to, issues occurring in the Western Gulf Region (including, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas).

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Announcement:

PTM™ for LCA Control – The Environmental Protection Agency has approved the use of PTM™ SC Insecticide (fipronil, BASF) for control of leaf-cutting ants (LCA). As mentioned in the last *PEST* newsletter (14.2), soil injections of PTM solution into LCA colony entrance holes resulted in outstanding control. BASF now awaits approval of the supplemental label (expected in a few weeks) and subsequent approval by the states (TX and LA) (perhaps in a month). Thus, we anticipate that product (in 20 oz and 2.5 gal containers) will be available for use by forest managers after the first of year (2010).

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Pest Spotlight: Cogongrass

Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica)* is an aggressive, rhizomatous, perennial grass that is distributed throughout the tropical and subtropical regions of the world. It has become established in the southeastern United States within the last fifty years, with Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida having extensive acreages of roadways and pastures infested with cogongrass. Scattered infestations are also found in Georgia, Louisiana, S. Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee (see map on page 3). Cogongrass first appeared in the area around Grand Bay, Alabama as an escape from crate packing in 1912. It was intentionally introduced into Mississippi and Florida during the 1920s to 1940s as possible forage and for soil stabilization purposes.

However, it was revealed that cogongrass was of little economic (forage) benefit and could become a serious pest. Consequently, it was placed on the noxious weed list, which prohibits new plantings. Unfortunately, cogongrass was spread by illegal plantings and inadvertent transport in forage and in soil during roadway construction. It does not survive in cultivated areas but becomes established along roadways, in forests, parks, and mining areas.

Cogongrass is a perennial grass that varies greatly in appearance. The leaves appear light green, with older leaves becoming orange-brown in color (see left, J. Lotz, FDOACS). In areas with killing

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Cogongrass (continued from Page 1)

frosts, the leaves will turn light brown during winter months and present a substantial fire hazard. Cogongrass grows in loose to compact bunches, each 'bunch' containing several leaves arising from a central area along a rhizome. The leaves originate directly from ground level and range from one- to four feet in length. Each leaf is 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch wide with a prominent, off-center, white mid-rib (see left, T. Bodner, SWSS). The leaf margins are finely serrated; contributing to the undesirable forage qualities of this grass. Seed production predominately occurs in the spring, with long, fluffy-white seedheads. Mowing, burning or fertilization can also induce sporadic seedhead formation. Seeds are extremely small and attached to a plume of long hairs. Although the seeds can be carried long distances by wind and animals, the spread of cogongrass by seed is questionable and still under investigation.

Rhizomes are responsible for the survival and short-distance spread of cogongrass (see left, J. Miller, USFS). Established stands may produce over 3 tons of rhizomes per acre. The specialized anatomy of the rhizome allows for water conservation. The rhizome can also penetrate to a depth of 4 feet in the soil, although the majority of rhizomes remain in the top 6 inches. The sheer mass and persistence of rhizomes are not the only factors contributing to the ability of cogongrass to dominate an area. It has also been reported that these rhizomes exude allelopathic substances, which inhibit growth of other plants. As the density of cogongrass increases, all other vegetation may be excluded and normal succession of species will not occur.

Cogongrass is an opportunistic plant and invades a wide range of non-cultivated habitats including rights-of-way, forests, pastures, orchards, and waste areas. Cogongrass thrives on fine sand to heavy clay

and does well on soils of low fertility. Cogongrass thrives in full sunlight, but may extend well into a mature forest stand, especially if there is no intermediate tree or shrub layer. Cogongrass will not grow in saturated soils, but tolerates periodic flooding reasonably well. Infestations of this perennial grass from Asia form exclusive colonies, displacing native vegetation with the exception of mature trees (see above, Greg Leach, International Paper). In addition, cogongrass is a fire-adapted species, meaning that it thrives where fire occurs regularly. As a result, cogongrass burns hot and readily, creating safety and property loss concerns. Wildfire in cogongrass can kill mature and seedling trees and native plants, furthering its domination.

Attempts at finding biological controls for cogongrass have met with limited success. Pathogens have been isolated but none have been developed for effective control. Cogongrass does not tolerate dense shade. In Asian rubber plantations, cogongrass dies back upon canopy formation. However, reports of invasion into old-growth forests in Florida suggest that a more shade-tolerant ecotype has developed.

Extensive research has been conducted in Africa, southeast Asia, and the United States for the control of cogongrass. Burning, cultivation, cover crops, and herbicides have been used with varying degrees of effectiveness. To eliminate cogongrass, the rhizomes must be destroyed to avoid regrowth. Cultivation and herbicides have been the two control strategies used most often. One of the oldest and most successful methods is to deep plow or disk several times during the dry season to desiccate the rhizomes and exhaust the food reserves. It is essential to cut to a depth of at least 6 inches to ensure that most, if not all, the

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Cogongrass (continued from Page 2)

rhizomes have been cut. Results from these practices are evident when observing cogongrass growing up to the edge of a cultivated field with no evidence of spread into the field itself.

The use of herbicides for control of cogongrass began in the 1940s. Out of dozens of herbicides tested for significant activity on cogongrass only two - the active ingredients glyphosate (Roundup®, Glypro®, Accord®, etc.) and imazapyr (Arsenal®, Arsenal® AC, and Chopper®) - have any appreciable effect on this grass. Even at high rates and combinations, cogongrass often regenerates within a year following a single application of either product. A minimum of two applications per year is needed, realizing that older infestations may require 2-3 years of treatment to eliminate rhizomes. Glyphosate has no soil residual activity and permits planting replacement species after application. Imazapyr has both soil and foliar activity and can severely injure susceptible plant species that are planted too soon after the last treatment. Most vegetables, row crops, and ornamentals WILL BE INJURED if planted with 24 months following an imazapyr application. For exact rates and times of herbicide application, consult the herbicide label for the most current legal information. As with all pesticides, proper handling and usage are of utmost importance and ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.

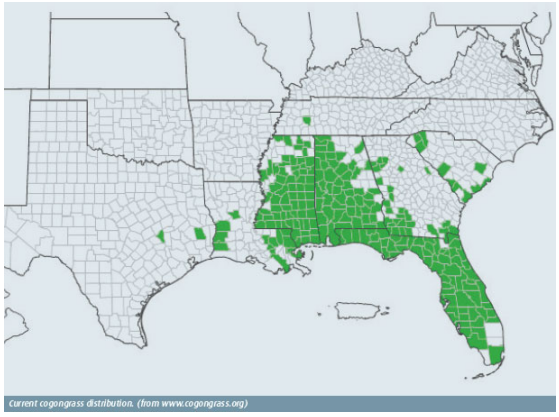
Although tillage and herbicides will provide some control and suppression of cogongrass, long-term eradication is seldom achieved. It has been shown that an integrated approach that combines burning, tillage (mechanical disturbance), and chemical applications provide the best solution for cogongrass management. Initially, cogongrass should be burned or mowed to remove excess thatch and older leaves. This initiates regrowth from the rhizomes, thereby reducing rhizome biomass. It also allows herbicides to be applied to only actively-growing leaves, maximizing herbicide absorption into the plant. Ideally, burning should take place in the summer. A one- to four-month regrowth period has been shown to provide a sufficient level of leaf biomass for herbicide treatment. This targets herbicide applications to be made in the late summer/early fall - approximately 1 month prior to the average killing frost, depending on the geographic location. Once again, the herbicides glyphosate (Roundup®, others) or imazapyr (Arsenal®, Chopper®) have been shown to provide the best control. If tillage can be incorporated, then a disking treatment directly following a burn is the best approach. This will further deplete the rhizome reserve through dessication and increase the number of shoots per given area. A one- to four-month regrowth period before herbicide treatment is needed with this approach as well.

Once good control of cogongrass has been achieved, it is essential to introduce desirable vegetation as quickly as possible to prevent cogongrass from re-infesting the area. Several species have been shown to colonize rapidly and tolerate the residual affects of imazapyr. A wider range of plant species can be used with glyphosate due to the lack of soil activity. However, cogongrass will eventually begin to re-infest, regardless of control. Therefore, diligence and persistence are essential to remove/treat re-infested areas before this grass regains a foothold.

References

MacDonald, G., B. Sellar, K. Langeland, T. Duperron and E. Ketterer. 2008. *Invasive Species Management Plans for Florida*. IFAS Extension Circular 1529. http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/199.

Faircloth, W., M. Patterson, J. Miller and D. Teem. 2009. Cogongrass. ***http://www.ag.auburn.edu/agrn/cogongrass/cogongrass%20fact%20sheet.htm***



Current Cogongrass Distribution (from www.congograss.org)

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Thought You Might Be Interested to Know . . .

New Required Safety Measures for Soil Fumigant Pesticides

Source: U.S. EPA web site, http://www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/soil_fumigants via Illinois Pesticide Review, Sept/Oct. 2009)

Due to their volatile nature, soil fumigants have the potential to pose risk concerns to people involved in the application (handlers), workers who re-enter fumigated fields (workers), and people who may be near the treated area (bystanders).

EPA's Amended Reregistration Eligibility Decisions (REDs) for the fumigants chloropicrin, dazomet, metam sodium/potassium, and methyl bromide include a suite of measures designed to work together to reduce exposures, enhance safety, and facilitate compliance and enforcement.

These mitigation measures include: worker protections, fumigant management plans, stewardship and training programs, good agricultural practices, buffer zones, posting requirements, emergency preparedness and response measures.

The Amended REDs are based on public comments, new scientific data, and information submitted in response to EPA's July 2008 Soil Fumigant REs. For additional information, please see the Agency's Web page at http://www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/soil_fumigants/ on risk mitigation measures for the soil fumigants.

Buffer Zones Fact Sheet. This fact sheet summarizes new requirements for buffer zones around fumigated fields. Buffer zones will increase protections for agricultural workers and bystanders – people who live, work, or otherwise spend time near fields that are fumigated. When new fumigant labels that require buffer zones appear in the market place in 2011, fumigant users will need to establish buffer zones around treated fields to reduce risks from acute inhalation exposure to bystanders.

Posting Fact Sheet. This fact sheet summarizes new requirements for posting buffer zones around fumigated fields. It is important that bystanders stay out of buffer zones. When new fumigant labels with buffer zones appear in the marketplace in 2011, fumigant users will need to post buffer zones to ensure people know where they are and stay out.

Worker Protection Measures Fact Sheet. This fact sheet summarizes new requirements to protect fumigant handlers and workers from fumigant exposures. When new fumigant labels appear in the market place in 2010, fumigant users will need to comply with these new requirements to protect fumigant handlers and other workers.

Fumigant Management Plans and Postapplication Summary Reports Fact Sheet. This fact sheet summarizes new requirements for fumigant management plans (FMPs) and postapplication summary reports. When new fumigant labels appear in the marketplace around 2010, fumigators will need to ensure that a site-specific FMP is in place before beginning a fumigant application. They will also need to prepare a postapplication summary report to document any deviations from the FMP that may have been necessary, as well as results of air monitoring done during and after the application.

Site-Specific Emergency Preparedness and Response Fact Sheet. This fact sheet summarizes new emergency preparedness and response requirements for fumigant applications. These requirements address potential risks to people who live or work near areas where soil fumigants are applied, in case the fumigant moves outside the buffer zone at concentrations of concern. New fumigant labels that appear in the marketplace in 2011 will require fumigators to adopt these measures.

Applicator and Handler Training Programs: EPA is requiring fumigant registrants to develop and implement training programs for applicators in charge of soil fumigations on proper use and good agricultural practices so these applicators are better prepared to effectively manage fumigant operations. The registrants also must prepare and disseminate training information and materials for fumigant handlers (those working under the supervision of the certified applicator in charge of fumigations).

Providing safety information to other fumigant handlers will help them understand and adhere to practices that will protect them from risks of exposure. The training materials must include elements designed to educate workers regarding work practices that can reduce exposure to fumigants, and thereby improve safety for workers and bystanders.

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Soil Fumigants (continued from Page 4)

Good Agricultural Practices: Current fumigant labels recommend practices that help reduce off-gassing and improve the safety and effectiveness of applications. The Agency has determined that including certain practices on labels as requirements rather than recommendations will minimize inhalation and other risks from fumigant applications. Several fumigant products already incorporate some of these measures on their labels. Examples of good agricultural practices include proper soil preparation/tilling, ensuring optimal soil moisture and temperature, appropriate use of sealing techniques, equipment calibration, and weather criteria.

Application Method, Practice, and Rate Restrictions: The Agency is restricting certain fumigant application methods and practices for which data are not currently available to determine appropriate protections, or that lead to risks that are otherwise difficult to address. These include certain untarped applications for some fumigants. EPA is also lowering maximum application rates to reflect those rates needed for effective use, thereby reducing the potential for inhalation exposure and risk.

Restricted Use Pesticide Classification: All soil fumigant products containing methyl bromide, 1,3-dichloropropene, iodomethane, and chloropicrin are currently restricted use pesticides, but many soil fumigant products containing metam sodium/potassium and dazomet are not restricted use pesticides. The Agency has determined that all of the soil fumigants undergoing reregistration meet the criteria for restricted use. Therefore, EPA will reclassify metam sodium/potassium and dazomet as restricted use pesticides.

Compliance Assistance and Assurance Measures: Assuring compliance with new label requirements is an important part of the package of mitigation measures. Some states have mechanisms in place to obtain information needed to assist and assure compliance with new fumigant requirements. Therefore, in states that wish to receive this information, fumigators must notify State and Tribal Lead Agencies for pesticide enforcement about applications they plan to conduct. This information will aid those states in planning compliance assurance activities. EPA will work with all the states to amend their cooperative agreements with the Agency to include strategies for assuring compliance with new fumigant labels. States that do not choose to receive notification will need to document in their cooperative agreements their methods of identifying fumigant application periods and locations.

Community Outreach and Education Programs: EPA is requiring fumigant registrants to develop and implement community outreach programs to ensure that information about fumigants and safety is available within communities where soil fumigation occurs. Outreach and information will address the risk of bystander exposure by educating community members about fumigants, buffer zones, how to recognize early signs of fumigant exposure, and how to respond appropriately in case of an incident.

American Chestnut is Making a Come Back

(News-Observer, (NC), 9/25/09 via Chemically Speaking, Oct. 2009*)*

Five hundred blight-resistant American chestnut saplings are thriving a year after they were planted in three national forests, a milestone in the long-term effort to re-establish the tree in its native habitat. Reviving the chestnut, decimated by a fungus, would reverse one of the worst ecological disasters in the nation's history, reviving a major source of food and lumber that forest animals and humans have missed for more than a century. The genetic research that offers the promise of a blight-resistant hybrid could, if successful, also be used to stop the damage to U.S. forests by other exotic pests, such as bark beetles, the woolly adelgid and Dutch elm disease. "If it works, there is a long line of similar ecological problems that are waiting for similar kinds of solutions," said Ron Sederoff, a professor in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources at N.C. State. "There are 100 different threatened trees in our American forest, and each one has a disease or a pest that potentially could do as much damage as the blight did to the American chestnut."

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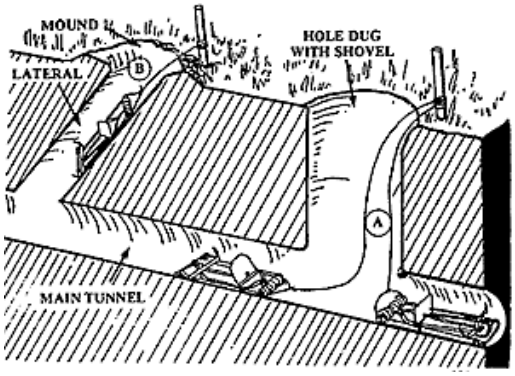
Gopher Control: Tips on How to Get Rid of These Pesky Critters

(Source: http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/gopher/gophercontrol.html)

Pocket gophers can cause significant damage in forestry nurseries and plantations, urban landscapes and agricultural settings. Gophers may be controlled with varying success by trapping, gassing, poisoning, flooding, cultural methods, use of repellents, and exclusion. It becomes more difficult to control gophers once they have developed a network of burrows in an area. Daily monitoring for new activity is critical to damage prevention and successful control. While lethal methods can seem cruel, they are the most effective. It is also important to remember that gophers perform valuable functions in wildland ecosystems. They aerate and redistribute soil, incorporate organic matter, and inoculate soil with beneficial microorganisms.

Trapping. Buy at least two traps and use two feet of wire to tie them to a common stake. Traps should be set in pairs. Using a probe to find a main tunnel, excavate and expose the burrow. Set each trap and insert it well into the tunnel and cover the hole so that no light enters the tunnel. When gophers see light, they start pushing soil. This may trigger the trap without catching the gopher. Traps should be checked and reset daily until gophers are caught and no new mounds appear.



Live Trapping. Some people are opposed to killing any unwanted visitors, so they resort to live trapping and releasing the animal in another location. Live trapping is not practical for use on gophers due to their burrowing habits. A few words of caution about live trapping of any nuisance wildlife: the released animal has been removed from familiar territory and food sources and may die as a result. In many cases, these animals die a more inhumane death than if a lethal trap had been used.

Fumigants. Gas cartridges are readily available from nurseries and hardware stores. Unfortunately, they are often not successful in treating pocket gophers. Unless the soil is moist, the gas diffuses into the soil rather than the burrow. Gophers also sense a change in the burrow system and can react by closing off that section of the burrow with soil. Car exhaust (carbon monoxide) has also been used to treat gophers and is reported to be effective. However, newer vehicles produce less carbon monoxide and are thereby less effective.

Toxicants

Toxicants (poison baits) are effective, but can also cause secondary poisoning of non-target species such as domestic cats and dogs or other indigenous predators. Generally this method of gopher control is not recommended for home landscapes. If baits are to be used, then using a bait placement tool should be used to properly locate the bait in the burrow. For large land areas, a tractor-drawn device called “burrow builder” or "gopher getter" can be used to applies toxic bait as it creates a tunnel. Toxicants are not effective when placed above ground and will have a high likelihood of killing non-target organisms.

Propane Exploding Devices. New devices on the market (Rodenator®, Gophernator®, Rodent Blaster®) utilize a mixture of propane and oxygen which is pumped into the tunnel system and ignited. While the concussion of the explosion would certainly kill the animal (assuming it was close enough), we have not seen any peer-reviewed

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Gopher Control (continued from Page 6)

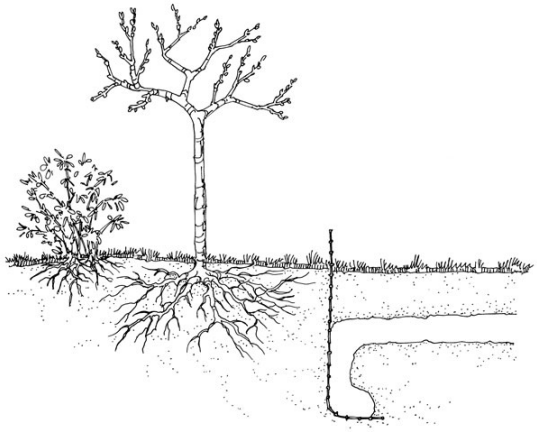
evidence of its efficacy on pocket gophers at this time. We should also caution potential buyers to consult with their state's division of wildlife BEFORE purchasing such devices. Some states prohibit the use of explosive devices on wildlife.

Flooding. The use of flooding is generally not recommended Water can be destructive to the landscape and control effectiveness is often limited. Topography and burrow configurations often allow gophers to escape drowning. Although flood irrigation is not used extensively in modern urban landscape situations, gophers will be less likely to inhabit areas where flood irrigation is used.

Cultural Controls. Cultural controls are those that discourage pocket gophers. These are most feasible for large areas in production agriculture and rely on habitat/food source modifications. Examples include weed control, flood irrigation, planting crop varieties that have fewer taproots, rotation of crops, and damage resistant plant varieties. Some of these could be effective in landscape situations. Natural predators, such as bull snakes, rattlesnakes, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and raptors can also control pocket gophers but may not always be welcome guests in the garden.

Repellents. In concept, repellents are environmentally friendly, but are not nearly as reliable. For instance, some people claim to effectively control gophers by placing human hair, perfumed soaps, moth balls, or other materials in gopher burrows. The gopher will most likely push a soil plug into place and move on. The gopher purge plant, *Euphorbia lathyris*, has no proven direct effect on gophers.

Exclusion. The most reliable pocket gopher treatment for small areas is exclusion. This is achieved by digging a trench 24-36 inches deep, and building a barrier of sheet metal, concrete, or hardware cloth. Remember, the barrier should also extend at least 12 inches above ground. Problems with exclusion include excessively rocky soil and the occasional gopher that will dig under the barrier.



Other Information Sources:

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/ec/ec1255.pdf

http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2709/NREM-9001web.pdf

http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1302A.pdf

http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/NATRES/06515.html

http://icwdm.org/handbook/rodents/PocketGophers.asp

http://icwdm.org/wildlife/pocketgopher.asp

http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7433.html

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A Little Humor Goes a Long Way

Roping a Deer

(Source: Darwin Awards 2007 Urban Legend, http://www.darwinawards.com/)

I had this idea that I was going to rope a deer, put it in a stall, sweet feed it on corn for a few weeks, then butcher it and eat it. Yum! Corn-fed venison. The first step in this adventure was getting a deer.

Since they congregate at my cattle feeder and do not have much fear of me (a bold one will sometimes come right up and sniff at the bags of feed while I am in the back of the truck four feet away) it should not be difficult to rope one, toss a bag over its head to calm it down, then hog-tie it and transport it home.

I filled the cattle feeder and hid behind it with my rope. The cattle, having seen a roping or two before, stayed well back. They were not having any of it. After 20 minutes, my deer showed up, 3 of them. I

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Deer (continued from Page 7)

picked a likely looking one, stepped out, and threw my rope. The deer just stood there and stared at me. I wrapped the rope around my waist and twisted the end so I would have a good hold. The deer still just stood and stared at me, but you could tell she was mildly concerned about the whole rope situation.

I took a step toward it. It took a step away. I put a little tension on the rope, and received an education. The first thing I learned is that, while a deer may just stand there looking at you funny while you rope it, it is spurred to action when you start pulling on that rope. That deer EXPLODED.

The second thing I learned is that, pound for pound, a deer is a LOT stronger than a cow or a colt. A cow or a colt in that weight range, I could fight down with some dignity. A deer? No chance.

That thing ran and bucked, it twisted and pulled. There was no controlling that deer, and certainly no getting close to it. As it jerked me off my feet and started dragging me across the ground, it occurred to me that having a deer firmly attached to a rope was not such a good idea. The only upside is that they do not have much stamina.

A brief ten minutes later it was tired, and not as quick to jerk me off my feet and drag me. It took me a few minutes to realize this, since I was mostly blinded by the blood flowing out of the big gash in my head.

At that point, I had lost my appetite for corn-fed venison. I hated the thing, and would hazard a guess that the feeling was mutual. I just wanted to get that devil creature off the end of that rope. But if I let it go with the rope hanging around its neck, it would likely die slow and painful somewhere.

Despite the gash in my head, and several large knots where I had cleverly arrested the deer's pell-mell flight by bracing my head against large rocks as it dragged me across the ground, I could still think clearly enough to recognize that I shared some tiny amount of responsibility for the situation we were in. I didn't want the deer to suffer a slow death.

I managed to get it lined up between my truck and the feeder, a little trap I had set beforehand, like a squeeze chute. I backed it in there, and I started moving forward to get my rope back.

Did you know that deer bite? They do! I never in a million years would have thought that a deer would bite, so I was very surprised when I reached up there to grab hold of that rope, and the deer grabbed hold of my wrist. Now, when a deer bites you, it is not like a horse, it does not just bite and let go. A deer bites and shakes its head, like a pit bull. They bite HARD and won't let go. It hurts!

The proper reaction when a deer bites you is probably to freeze and draw back slowly. I tried screaming and wrenching away. My method was ineffective. It felt like that deer bit and shook me for several minutes, but it was likely only several seconds.

I, being smarter than a deer (though you may be questioning that claim by now) tricked it. While I kept it busy tearing the bejesus out of my right arm, I reached up with my left hand and pulled that rope loose. That was when I learned my final lesson in deer behavior for the day.

Deer will strike at you with their front feet. They rear right up and strike at head and shoulder level, and their hooves are surprisingly sharp. I learned long ago that when a horse strikes at you with its hooves and you can't get away, the best thing to do is make a loud noise and move aggressively towards the animal. This will cause it to back down a bit, so you can make your escape.

This was not a horse. This was a deer. Obviously, such trickery would not work. In the course of a millisecond, I devised a different strategy. I screamed like a woman and turned to run.

The reason we have been taught NOT to turn and run from a horse that paws at you is that there is a good chance that it will hit you in the back of the head. Deer are not so different from horses after all, other than being twice as strong and three times as evil. The second I turned to run, it hit me right in the back of the head and knocked me down.

When a deer paws at you and knocks you down, it does not immediately depart. I suspect it does not recognize that the danger has passed. What it does instead is paw your back and jump up and down on you, while you are laying there crying like a little girl and covering your head.

I finally managed to crawl under the truck, and the deer went away. Now I know why people go deer hunting with a rifle and scope. It’s so they can be somewhat equal to the prey.

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Humor (continued from Page 8)

Ninja Deer Hunter

(Source: Darwin Awards 2009 Honorable Mention)

Every time I read the story of the man who roped a deer (story above), I am reminded of my father's friend. He was out in one of the many hunting leases in southeast Texas, hunting in his favorite spot, a climbing stand in an open creek bottom. One morning he heard a deer blow at his back but he didn't risk turning to look for fear of scaring the animal. He waited until the large buck sauntered just under the tree he was in.

Apparently he must not have had time to carefully determine his next course of action. Rather than lean down and shoot the animal in the head, he opted to attack with a large hunting knife that is commonly used for blood-letting and skinning. Positioning himself in a cat-like crouch, he pounced on the deer, intending to close the deal on what would have been an awesome deer-slaying story.

But when he landed the trajectory of the knife was slightly askew. He swung the knife under its throat and into his own opposing thigh. Since he landed primarily on the animal's neck it had no choice but to throw its large rack back into the man's face... The hunter lost consciousness following the head butt, so the following is clear speculation based on the blood trail and shards of clothing.

He appeared to have been dragged about 40 yards across the forest floor, his flannel jacket being the main reason for staying on the buck after the 8 second buzzer. Four hours later, his worried wife came to check on him, and found him in an unconscious state with blood and puncture wounds all about his body.

Splitting Headache

(Source: Darwin Awards 2007 Honorable Mention)

A man was splitting seasoned wood early one autumn in preparation for the quickly approaching winter. One after another, he would drive his sharp axe through a log, then toss the split wood onto the pile. He was making light work of the logs when he came to one with a particularly large diameter.

Feeling overzealous, he decided to split the log anyway. He lined up his shot, and brought the axe down dead-center, only to bury the axe blade deep in the girthy log without splitting it. With a swift action, he jerked up on the handle to free the axe for another swing. In doing so, the log scooted forward about a foot before the axe broke free.

Rather than move the heavy log back into place, the man stepped forward a foot to take another swing. The second swing met with the same result as the first, as did the third attempt, the fourth, and so on. In his relentless determination to split the unsplittable, the man did not notice that he and the log had traveled some twenty-five feet across the yard, and were now positioned beneath the clothesline.

As he brought the axe down for another whack at the log, the axe head caught the clothesline, which acted in the same manner as a bow string. The axe had barely touched the top of the log when the clothesline reached its maximum draw, propelling the axe head back toward the man at an ungodly velocity. It found its mark right between his eyes.

Fortunately, the blunt side of the axe head made contact, and rather than killing him, it merely collapsed his sinus and fractured his skull. He recovered, and learned a very important lesson: Always be aware of your surroundings when hurling a sharp object through the air with great force.

“Wishing Ya’ll a Great Thanksgiving!!!!”