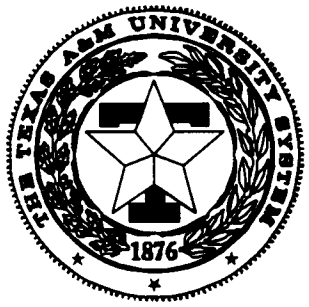
PUBLICATIONS

1998

FORAGE-LIVESTOCK FIELD DAY REPORT - 1998

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH and EXTENSION CENTER at OVERTON

Texas Agricultural Experiment Station
Texas Agricultural Extension Service



April 16, 1998

Research Center Technical Report 98-1

EFFICACY OF ELASTRATOR BANDS TO REMOVE VELVET ANTLERS AND PREVENT ANTLER REGROWTH IN YEARLING FALLOW BUCKS

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Background. Avoidance of hard spike antlers on yearling bucks being produced for venison would be advantageous. The current practice of cutting hard antlers is done after the bucks are near slaughter weights and when the bucks are more aggressive as they enter the rut. Reports from New Zealand indicate that elastrator bands can be used to remove velvet antlers from yearling bucks. The purpose of this experiment was to determine the efficacy of elastrator bands in removal of velvet antlers and the incidence of antler regrowth after removal of the velvet antlers.

Research Findings. Two replicates of intact yearling fallow bucks received elastrator bands on both antlers while in velvet antler. Replicate 1 (n = 34) received treatment April 11, 1997 and replicate 2 (n = 28) received treatment April 18, 1997. Replicate 1 was at Bent Tree Farms, Bullard, TX and replicate 2 at TAES, Overton, TX. Replicate 1 was not observed for shedding the velvet antlers but in replicate 2, all animals shed both velvet antlers by May 22, 1997 (Table 1). Antler regrowth was recorded and hard antlers removed August 16, 1997 for replicate 1 and September 5, 1997 for replicate 2. Replicates were similar for antler regrowth (Table 2). Only 43.5% of the bucks failed to regrow any antler, as 56.5% regrew one or both antlers.

Application. Elastrator bands were 100% effective in removing velvet antlers, but over 50% of the treated animals regrew antlers which required removal of hard spike antlers before slaughter. This procedure was not successful as a management practice.

Table 1. Efficacy of elastrator bands for removing velvet antlers from yearling fallow bucks.

Days after Banding	Right		Left	
	Number	%	Number	%
18	8/28	28.6	7/28	25.0
34	28/28	100.0	28/28	100.0

Table 2. Incidence of antler regrowth following removal of velvet antlers in yearling fallow bucks.

Regrowth Category	Replicate 1		Replicate 2		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
No regrowth	14/34	36.8	13/28	46.4	27/62	43.5
1 antler	9/34	26.5	8/28	28.6	17/62	27.4
2 antler	11/34	32.4	7/28	25.0	18/62	29.0
1 or 2 antlers	20/34	58.8	15/28	53.6	35/62	56.4