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FIELD STAFF

FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

50 • APRIL 2021

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CHARLES J. ASHMEYER

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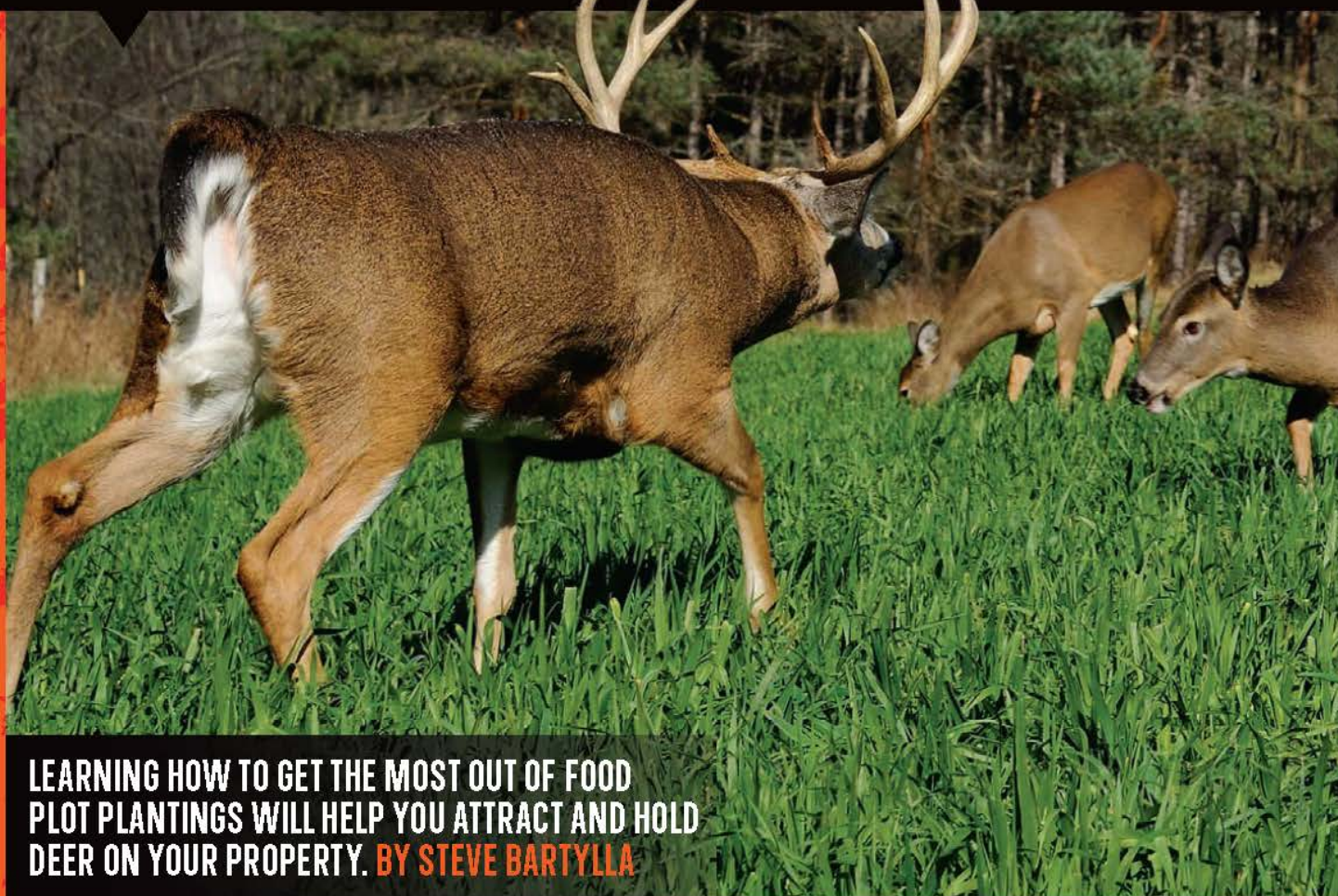

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FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

SPECIAL SECTION



LEARNING HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF FOOD PLOT PLANTINGS WILL HELP YOU ATTRACT AND HOLD DEER ON YOUR PROPERTY. BY STEVE BARTYLLA

Amazed it was the first week of March and I was already packing my last Trophy Clover plot, I had no clue what was coming. After a somewhat typical spring, the faucet shut off, and the area didn't receive an inch of rain during any month the next year. With ridiculously high deer numbers, low natural browse levels and an almost complete farm crop failure in the area, those early plantings saved the lives of many deer — and my hunting that fall.

Whether it's a once-in-a-lifetime drought or the more common scenario of trying to grow food plots on limited acreage, land managers have powerful incentives to coax maximum production from plantings. It often makes the differences between great and horrible stand sites and directly affects the health of deer.

Here are the best methods I've found to maximize food plot tonnages.

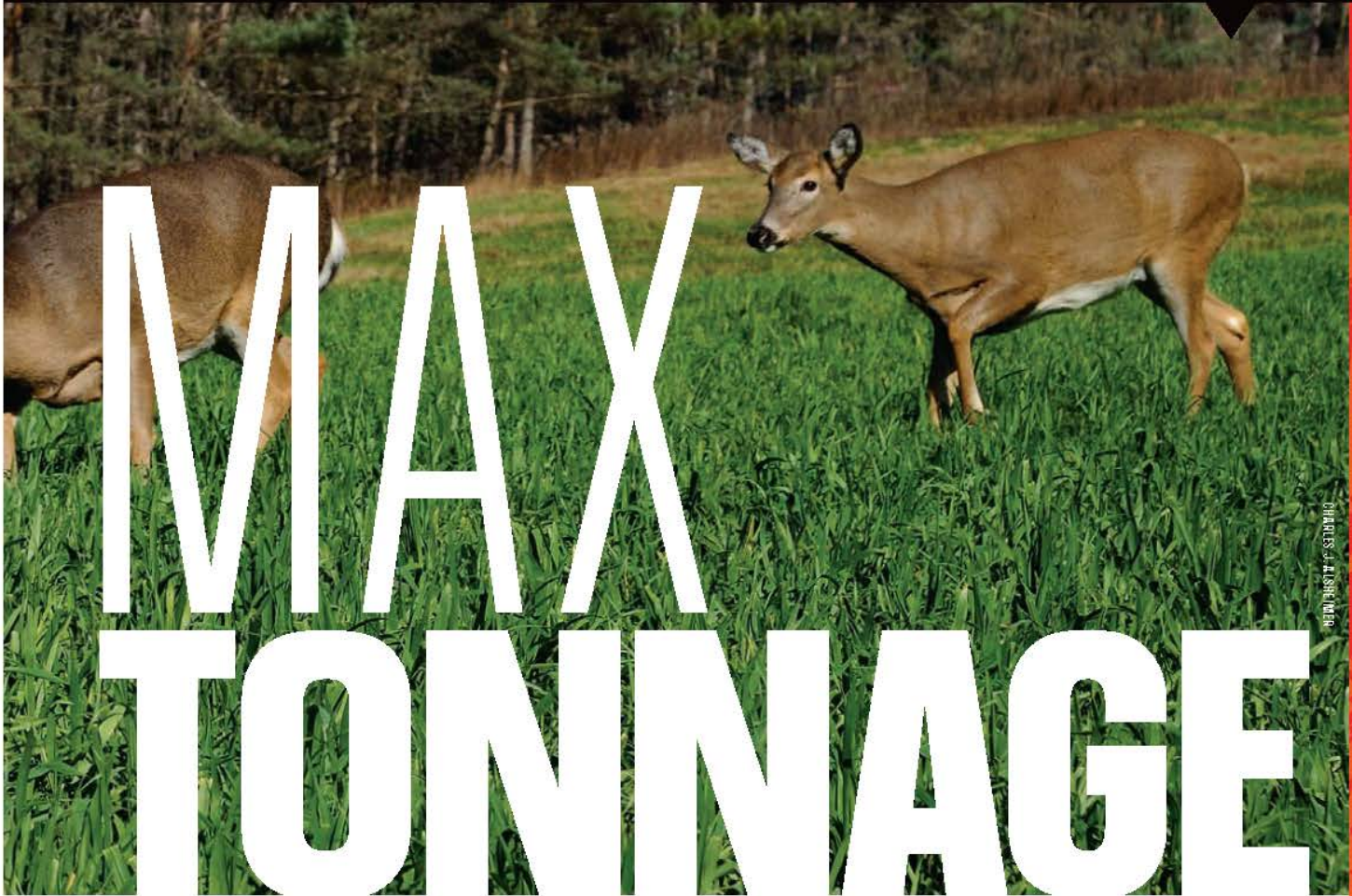
TREATING THE SOIL

Nothing else matters if the soil isn't in a state conducive to growing a specific planting. Although many soils can grow crops, few are naturally in ideal condition for maximizing growth rates. If you want to produce the best food plot, start by addressing the soil.

The first step should always be a full soil test, in which you receive an exact snapshot of the soil's current state and the fertilizer and lime requirements to hit its sweet spot for a specific planting. That's ideal.

However, pH is the most important aspect. The more acidic the soil, the less efficiently plants can use its nutrients. In fact, plants that fix nitrogen can't do so effectively if the pH is 5.5 or lower. The same ineffectiveness of nutrient uptake occurs with excessively alkaline soils. In either case, with each point a soil varies from neutral, fertilizer costs go through the roof, and that's just to achieve the same results as with a neutral soil. Fertilizers are far more expensive than lime, and plants can't achieve maximum growth without effectively uptaking required soil nutrients.

Another less-known method of maximizing growth is treating the soil with an organic, humic-based liquid carbon. These can be sprayed directly onto the soil or when spraying existing plantings. Doing so boosts the available organic matter in the soils close to an additional 20%, making big differences in drought prevention, increasing germination rates, encouraging more robust root development, increasing production rates and raising pH. This works in concert with



CHARLES J. ASH, M.D.

sunlight, proper pH, soil moisture and soil fertility to ensure soils provide what plantings require.

Pro tip: When in a jam, a quality instant pH soil test can alert you within minutes to the amount of lime required.

Pro tip: All limes take time to break down and neutralize the soil. Pelletized lime costs more, but it breaks down in a few weeks to months. Field lime takes about a half-year to start delivering. Pelletized lime also requires less to achieve a bigger shift in pH.

Pro tip: Remember, for a fertilizer to work, a plant's roots must reach it. Disc fertilizers in shallow.

Pro tip: Frost seeding small-seeded plantings onto bare dirt is an easy way to establish plots and maximize production the first year by realizing every growing day.

TREATING THE PLANTING

With soils addressed, let's look at maxing plantings. That starts with timing.

When planting perennials — such as clovers, chicories and alfalfas, which are excellent choices for deer — timing matters. Fall plantings are better than spring plantings for germination rates and weed

competition the first year. However, spring plantings create far more tonnages of food that first year than fall plantings.

Next, you must match planting to the conditions, size of the plot and amount of feeding pressure the plot will likely receive. Alfalfas are great at withstanding drought because of their deep roots, but clovers like more moist conditions. In other words, alfalfa will likely do far better atop a sandy ridge, but clovers will do better on more moist bottoms. Matching plantings to suitable growing conditions becomes evident in the tonnages produced.

The size is also important, as some crops thrive with heavy grazing but others get browsed to death. When planting a half-acre plot in a high-deer-density area, with no other powerful food attractions in the area, corn or beans will likely be wiped out before either can produce.

When planting limited acreage, selecting heavy browse-tolerant plantings can be huge. A half-acre of beans or corn might not survive browsing pressure, but clover, oats, alfalfa and cereal rye stand up to heavy browsing far better. In fact, it's difficult to browse any of them to death.

FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

SPECIAL SECTION

FIX “DEAD” SOIL

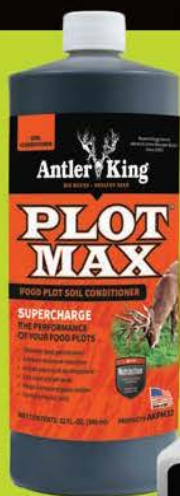
Whitetail food plots not only require a lot of work, but planning and a little bit of luck from Mother Nature. Seasoned food-plot practioners help stock the odds in their favor by the wise use of soil amendments.

A newer product that assists with getting the soil “right” is Antler King’s Plot Max™ liquid-based carbon soil conditioner. This product basically fixes “dead soil” and creates a more fertile planting environment.

To use, simply mix one bottle of Plot Max™ with 8 gallons of water to treat 1/2 acre. The application will increase seed germination, root development and moisture retention. Plot Max also raises pH levels, organic matter and unlocks available nutrients and minerals to maximize plant growth. It can also be mixed with any herbicide, requiring only one pass to save time and money.

As a bonus benefit, Plot Max™ contains humic acid, which can bind CWD prions in the soil.

Yield: A 32-ounce bottle of Plot Max covers 1/2 acre.



FAST FERTILIZATION

Fertilizer can make or break your deer hunting food plots, and traditional means aren’t exactly convenient or precise. Liquid foliar fertilizers help remove the guesswork – and manual work – from boosting a plot’s potential.

Antler King’s Jolt™ is a 9-17-8 (N-P-K) fertilizer designed to do just that. Simply add Jolt™ to water in your sprayer and spray your food plot. Jolt is absorbed through the leaves and stems of plants, and because it is a liquid, it doesn’t require rain to dissolve and won’t burn or kill the plants. Jolt can be mixed with other herbicides using only one pass.

Yield: A 32-ounce bottle of Jolt covers 2 acres.



INSTANT ANALYSIS

You can waste a lot of time, money and effort with food plots if you proceed with the process before finding out exactly what your soil is lacking in. And, although pH tests have been around for years, it usually required sending samples through the mail and then waiting for results. No more.

Antler King’s Instant pH Soil Test Kit allows food-plot practioners to check and maintain proper pH levels quickly and easily. Having proper pH levels ensures your plants can absorb the maximum minerals, nutrients and fertilizer available in the soil. To use, simply gather soil samples, add distilled water and receive your test results in about 20 minutes.

Each pH Soil Test Kit includes four test strips.

Location also matters. If deer don’t feel safe at a plot, it doesn’t really matter how many tons of food it produces. Putting a 1-acre food plot in the middle of a 400-acre open field probably doesn’t make much sense. The back corner might, though. How about clearing a spot you can get to and from undetected, about 50 yards into the woods along the trail those deer are using to get to that 400-acre field? You’re likely to see maximum deer feeding on that strategic kill plot.

Pro tip: When a planting is struggling because it’s overbrowsed, applying a foliar fertilizer can give it a two-week growth boost to keep up with browsing pressure.

Pro tip: Using cereal rye as a cover crop for fall plantings provides ample deer food the first fall, and the perennial plot establishes itself to come on strong the next spring.

Pro tip: Foliar fertilizers and organic, humic-based liquid carbon soil conditioners can be mixed with herbicides, allowing you to do all functions or a combination of two at the same time. Combining a fertilizer with herbicide increases the kill rate of weeds while giving the planting a growth boost.

Pro tip: On the wooded edges of larger plots, consider planting a 10-yard-wide band of clover next

to the woods. Clovers almost always grow better in partial shade than annual grains, brassicas and most other deer candy crops. The layout maxes food production while offering a diversity of feed choices.

Pro tip: Top seeding 100 pounds per acre of three-parts cereal rye and one-part oats atop bare dirt in standing corn, soybean or brassica plots is a great method of diversifying feed options while maximizing tonnages. Do so after the brassicas get 4 to 6 inches tall or the corn or soybean plants starts turning color, preferably before an all-day soaker rain. Because the deer are feeding on the tender greens of the cereal rye and oats, not their grains, late fall top seedings are fine.

CONCLUSION

Creating thriving food plots means producing raw tonnages of highly desirable deer food in areas they feel comfortable feeding. To achieve that, you must match plantings with the appropriate conditions, treat the soils to create ideal soil fertility and pH, and have a planting plan that matches the specifics, such as a planting that thrives on heavy browse pressure in smaller plots.



Ultra Coat™ ORANGE

Ultra Coat Orange - Antler King's protective seed coating that dissolved into food and fertilizer with rain to increase seed livability and tonnage

PERENNIAL FOOD PLOT

Antler King
BIG BUCKS - HEALTHY DEER

Trophy Clover Mix™

PERENNIAL CLOVER/CHICORY FOOD PLOT MIX

LONG LASTING FOOD PLOT - UP TO 6 YEARS!
Provides tons of 30% protein forage year after year!

PLANTS 1/2 ACRE!

- The highest protein and tonnage-producing perennial food plot mix on the market
- Provides protein needed for optimal antler growth
- Treated with Ultra Coat Orange for higher germination rates, greater seed viability, increased forage yield
- Plant spring or fall

NET WT: 3.5 LBS (1.59 kg) MODEL AKTCM

WITH Nutraction
STATE-OF-THE-ART NUTRITION
UNMATCHED ATTRACTION

Researching How to Attract & Grow Monster Bucks Since 1987.

★★★★★
Most tonnage
produces more tonnage than any other food plot mix on the market

★★★★★
Highest protein
more antler-growing protein than any other food plot mix

★★★★★
Stays green for gun season
extremely cold tolerant so your plot will stay green through rut and late gun season

★★★★★
Lasts up to six years
a true perennial clover mix (others add annuals) so it will last longer

“The best way to keep deer on your property is to make sure they always have plenty of food to eat. Nothing does this better than Trophy Clover Mix.”

Todd Stittleburg – Founder, Antler King

The fact is, you should have 5% of your acreage planted in food plots in order to give your deer a reason to stay. The truth is, most of us don't have 5% of our acreage in food plots. This is why it is so important to maximize the tonnage produced in the food plots you plant. Nothing produces more tonnage per acre than Trophy Clover Mix™.

More protein means bigger bucks

Bucks need protein to grow big antlers. Trophy Clover Mix™ also has the highest protein of any food plot mix.

Stays green when other food plots have died off

Trophy Clover Mix™ is extremely cold tolerant which means it will stay green from early fall season all the way through late gun season.

True perennial clover mix that lasts up to six years

Trophy Clover Mix™ contains four varieties of perennial clover, plus chicory. These perennial clovers will last up to six years without re-planting. Other clover mixes don't last this long because they contain annual clovers which are added so the plot looks better year one.

Kalmbach Feeds, 7148 State Highway 199, Upper Sandusky, OH 43351 | www.antlerking.com



Learn more at AntlerKing.com

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FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

SPECIAL SECTION



ALFALFA FOR ALL SEASONS

Whitetails love both alfalfa and clover, but traditional strains don't fare so well in cold weather. That is changing with new seed blends that are mixed specifically for wildlife food plots.

New for this year from Antler King is Booner Buffet, a specialized mix of a top-performing, cold-tolerant clover mixed with two cold-tolerant strains of multi-leaf alfalfa, along with chicory and rape. The result is a deer forage that thrives from spring through early winter.

Booner Buffet is designed to withstand heavy grazing yet keeps on growing. The seed varieties are also drought and disease resistant, making this a preferred choice for food plots from the extreme north to the deep south.

Yield: A 3-pound bag of Booner Buffet covers 1/4 acre.



UNDERSTANDING SEED SELECTION

Those food plotting often begin with what to plant. Once they settle on a crop, they are then confronted with a bunch of different choices. It seems that every seed company out there offers whatever planting one has in mind, many offering more than one. Does it matter which is selected and why?

Having worked for a large seed company for a handful of years in college, I have hands-on experience in developing new plantings. That doesn't make all my opinions correct, but it does allow me to better show how the cheese is made, so to speak.

THE BASICS

No two white clovers are the same. Every seed variety is different, in that each plant breeder has at least slightly different goals they are shooting for. To help achieve those goals, they play mad scientist, trying to combine desirable traits of various strains, while eliminating undesirable traits. The results are that no two are the same. In fact, they can be wildly different.

For example, in more arid regions, drought tolerance is a far more important trait than being able to tolerate standing water for prolonged periods. In the north,

maturing within a shorter growing season is an obvious target.

To truly determine the best fit for your plantings, one must first address their goals. For myself, price, hardiness, tonnages produced, how long the crop is viable and desirability to deer are the biggies. Still conducting field trials just as I did when working for the seed company, only now for deer, I can tell you there are big-time differences between the majority of the seed mixes, even when they contain the same general seed types.

MAKING THE PROPER SELECTION

To dig deeper, let's say we're going to plant an acre of alfalfa. Zip down to the local seed co-op, tell them you want alfalfa and they're going to ask which type. The selection will matter.

Most alfalfas are bred for producing hay crops and feeding cattle, many of which have the ability to break down tougher materials than deer. So, it's likely to have a taller, thicker stalk, as the cattle can break the stalk down and height is needed for haying.

To compare, let's look at the alfalfa in Antler King's Booner Buffet. It has a short, tender,

BY STEVE BARTYLLA

more easily digestible stalk than ag-grade alfalfa. This makes it more digestible for deer. Next, although frost tolerance isn't important for making hay, as that all occurs in summer, it sure is nice for feeding deer. If the alfalfa doesn't sour, the deer keep hammering it.

Although it barely scratches the surface, the alfalfa in Booner Buffet has a short, tender stalk. It's programmed to be more frost tolerant, keeping deer feeding on it, as well as having an overly large leaf, further increasing the digestible energies. Top it off with prioritizing protein and ease of digestion, and one can clearly see that matching the goals to the planting's traits truly matters.

CONCLUSION

No two clover, alfalfa and/or brassica varieties are the same. In fact, two varieties of the same category can be as different as apples and oranges. Therefore, before you run out and buy or plant anything, be sure you realize this fact and identify your food plot goals accordingly. It truly matters.



THE LEAVES ARE THE HUGGER!



- Multi-leaf perennial alfalfas feature more protein-packed leaves, less stalk
- Combined with perennial clover and chicory for years of attraction power
- 10% rape added to shade perennials during critical first summer heat, allowing establishment of deep tap roots; rape becomes target food source in the late fall

Booner Buffet™, the new multi-leaf alfalfa-based perennial food plot mix was specifically developed to crank out tonnage so your deer will never leave your property due to a lack of food. And, the huge alfalfa leaves are packed with antler-growing protein!

"We all know deer love alfalfa. But wait until your deer see this alfalfa. I've been searching for over 30 years for an alfalfa variety with more leaf and less stalk because the leaves are where the protein is. I found two varieties and they are both in our new Booner Buffet!"

Todd Stittleburg
Founder, Antler King



Clay Hill, Hill's Guides & Outfitters

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FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

SPECIAL SECTION



CREATE INSTANT COVER

If you're seeking to screen views, direct deer or create instant cover, a specialized blend of grain sorghum, forage sorghum and Sudangrass is a top choice for desired results.

This blend of cover and food is included in Antler King's Barricade™ – an annual cover screen that serves multiple purposes. For deer, it provides thick cover for bedding, while offering an easy food source in the grain sorghum within the bedding area.

For hunters, the thick, 8-foot-high stalks planted in strategic locations provide a cover screen, allowing easy undetected access to blinds and treestands when hunting. It also creates perfect funnels by simply leaving openings for deer to walk through near your treestand or blind.

For food plots, Barricade allows the hunter to plant barriers between fields, plots and woods, creating safe and secluded areas where mature bucks feel comfortable feeding.

Plant it near roads to eliminate road hunters, poachers and others from viewing and harassing deer on your property.

Yield: A 3-pound bag of Barricade covers 1/4 acre.



HIDING INTENTIONS

BY STEVE BARTYLLA

We all know that increased hunting pressure doesn't generally equal fantastic hunting. In fact, as the hunting pressure builds, the quality of hunts seems to have a directly inverse relationship.

At the same time, there are all sorts of social stresses happening within the whitetail world, as well. Evenly matched bucks are generally in competition during the rut. The subordinate bucks that want to play the game are always on edge, while Mr. Big himself is ever vigilant of his turf and females.

Within the family groups, there's a struggle for the best of the best. The most dominant groups take what they want, leaving scraps for the rest. Screening can help in both cases. Here's how.

BECOMING INVISIBLE

If deer can't see, hear or smell you, you aren't there. It's really as simple as that. We can over-hunt our grounds, with no adverse effects, so long as the deer have no clue we're there.

Well, part of that is dealing with odors and another is to not get busted in the treestand or ground blind. With that being said, screening can

do wonders for hiding our routes to and from stands.

Picture a field that looks like your extended hand and fingers. The palm is the main field, with each finger being inlets jutting into the woods. As is, hunt anywhere on that field and every deer out can see you come and go across the field.

Now imagine a barricade — a total screen — across the base of each of those fingers. Just that quick, we can cross that field with no deer in the fingers seeing us come or go. That's already a big deal!

Then find a way to slip through the woods, as well. So on an evening hunt, we can walk in across the field and slip out through a more dead zone in the woods. In the mornings we do the reverse. We've just become invisible.

REDUCING STRESS

At the same time, we've massively reduced the whitetails' social stress. For those family groups fighting over turf, well, out of sight means out of mind, to a great extent. We could now peacefully have a couple family groups feeding in the larger palm and one in each finger. No, it doesn't always work out that nicely,

but it's way closer than before the total screening cover was there.

It works similarly with bucks, but with an added bonus. No, we won't now peacefully hold seven bucks, two in the palm and one per finger. We might be able to cheat an extra one or two, though.

For the bonus, Mr. Big can no longer stand in the palm and check every finger at once. Instead, if he wants to know if there's competition or estrus does, he must go to each finger and check. Since we need to leave an opening in the Barricade for farm equipment, let's put that opening on the same side as the stand we have at the intersection of the finger and palm. He's going to use that opening nine out of 10 times. So we may as well put it within shooting distance of the stand.

CONCLUSION

Screening can be a big-time game changer for most all hunters on private grounds, but it can be mission critical for those on limited acres. Think creatively and Barricade can make 20 acres hunt like 80, and 80s hunt like 240s!






Six ways that Barricade™ will improve your hunting property!

BARRICADE™ is an annual cover screen and bedding plot, made up of Grain Sorghum, Forage Sorghum and Sorghum Sudangrass, that grows tall (up to 8') and thick to create a visual block and cover

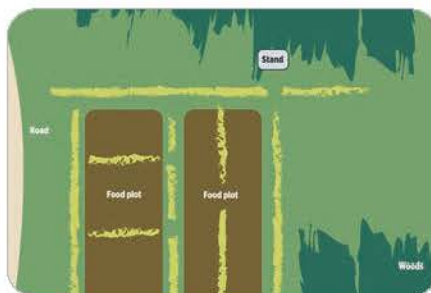
1. Stealth stand entry/exit (see Image above)

BARRICADE™ grows thick and up to 8' tall so you can plant a corridor of cover to walk behind. This dramatically reduces the likelihood of deer seeing you, which can eventually burn out your property.



2. Create funnels and travel corridors

Deer like to travel along cover. Planting BARRICADE™ allows you to funnel and direct deer movement closer to your stand or blind.



3. Divide food plots (to force bucks)

Use BARRICADE™ to divide and segment larger food plots forcing rutting bucks to move about and by your stand when checking for hot does.

4. Block poachers and drive-by gawkers

If poachers and drive-by traffic cannot see your deer from the road they are far less likely to shoot or spook your deer. BARRICADE™ is the easiest and most cost-effective way to block their view.



5. Create natural blind cover

Planting BARRICADE™ allows you to create natural blind cover so you can position your ground blind precisely where you want it, eliminating the need for brushing it in and letting you do same-day sets.

6. Create bedding cover

A plot of BARRICADE™ makes for great bedding cover which allows you to encourage deer to bed where you want them to bed and keep them on your property.

Learn more at AntlerKing.com



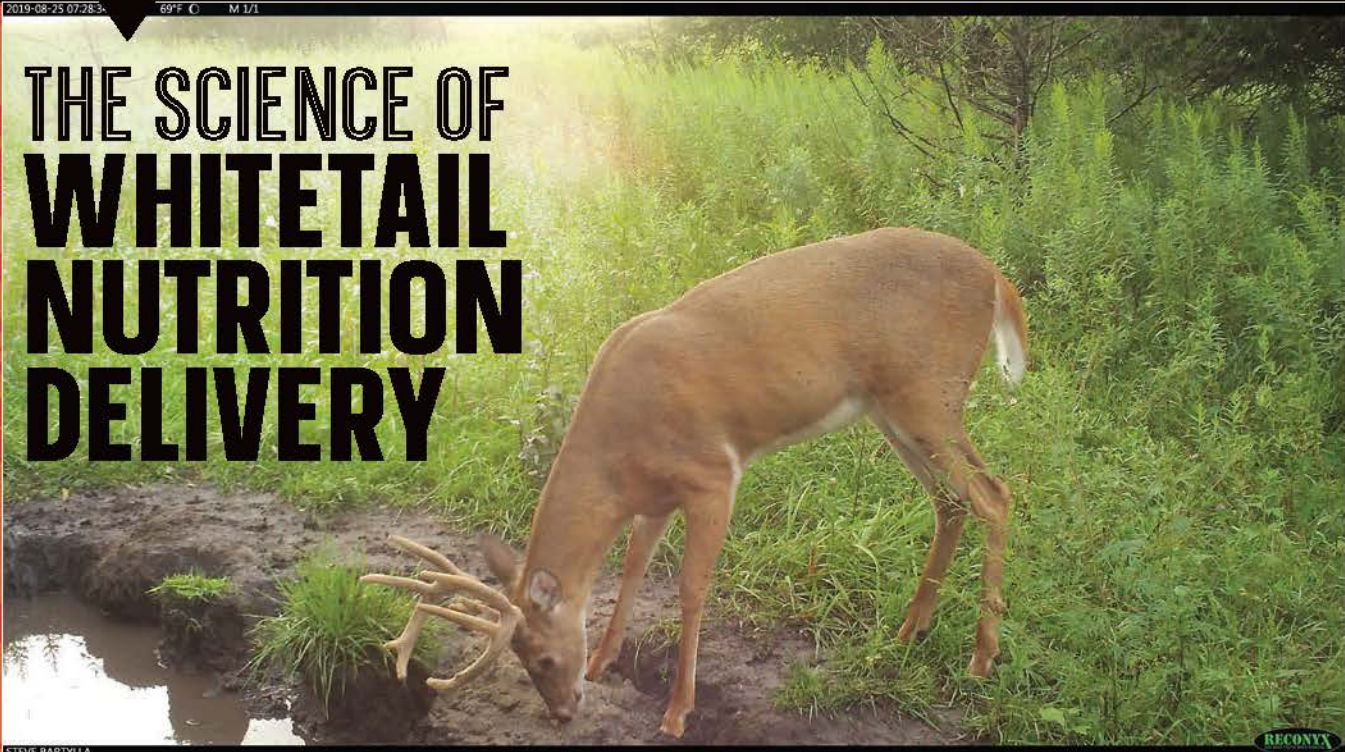
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THE SCIENCE OF WHITETAIL NUTRITION DELIVERY



STEVE BARTYLLA

RECONYX

LAND MANAGERS WHO WANT TO PROVIDE THE BEST HEALTH BENEFITS FOR DEER SHOULD UNDERSTAND HOW THE WHITE TAIL'S DIGESTIVE SYSTEM WORKS. BY STEVE BARTYLLA

One of the most eye-opening experiences I've had occurred many years ago when I spoke at a large deer expo in Kansas City, Missouri.

The top ruminant nutritionist from a large animal feed producer took me to school. He pointed to his shoe and asked what eating the shoe might do for a deer, even if the shoe contained 90% protein. Nothing, he explained, because the only consideration that matters is what a deer can effectively absorb and use. What they consume is meaningless.

As someone who believed I was starting to get deer nutrition, that blew my mind. It also opened my eyes to something few deer managers understand. Just because something is good for a cow doesn't mean it does squat for deer.

If you want to provide the greatest health benefits for deer, you must understand the science of nutrition delivery.

GRASPING THE FOUR-CHAMBERED STOMACH

As many folks know, deer are ruminants. Unlike humans, which have one stomach, deer have a four-chambered stomach.

That provides deer a significant survival advantage. Almost every prey species is most vulnerable when feeding. Predators figure out the prime feeding spots of prey species and lay in wait while the prey species

are distracted. It's an effective hunting method, as many of us have figured out, too.

A four-chambered stomach allows deer to almost inhale their food with minimal chewing. That lets them minimize the time spent feeding, return to protective cover, bed down and regurgitate their cud, then chew it in comparative safety. After the cud is further chewed, it can then pass to the next chamber to continue its breakdown.

Cows, goats and sheep also have four-chambered stomachs. So, products made to benefit their health also must help deer, right? Here's something else the top ruminant nutritionist schooled me on. Comparatively, deer have a much smaller first stomach chamber than cows, goats and sheep, which he generically referred to as super ruminants. That comparatively larger first chamber lets cows and sheep store materials that are more difficult to break down for significantly longer periods. So, they can break down and absorb much more difficult materials than deer.

That's a long way of saying that those minerals, vitamins and even some artificial feeds that are ideal for cattle, can be next to worthless for improving the health of deer. It's no different than eating a 90% protein leather shoe. Sure, you consumed a bunch of protein, but it merely burned calories as it worked its way out the other end, unabsorbed.

UNDERSTANDING STOMACH BIOLOGY

Meanwhile, remember that deer stomachs are thriving ecosystems all their own. The microbes and bacteria in the stomach evolve based on the deer's diet to best break down those foods.

At the same time, there's an interdependency involving the foods they eat. For example, eating a combo of browses allows for enhanced digestion compared to when deer feed exclusively on one browse. This is so pronounced that research indicates that northern white cedar might be the only browse species deer can live on exclusively all winter without combining with other browses.

Speaking of winter, that's when a deer's stomach biology can become their enemy, as well as a friend. Mature bucks lose an average of 25% to 30% body weight during the rut. Meanwhile, most deer, excluding those in the South, are at the seasonal low point for food during winter. Toss in snow depths and cold for deer experiencing true winters, and it's no wonder they have a negative energy balance all winter, burning more calories to survive than they can get from food.

Understandably, many well-meaning folks want to help deer get through winter. Unfortunately, overwinter feeding can do more harm than good if you don't address a couple of issues.

The first is factoring in their stomach biology. Remember, in areas with true winters, even farm fields will be covered in snow. The big woods typically don't have any agricultural crops for deer to eat,

anyway. In both cases, after about a week of eating mostly buds, sticks, weeds and dead grasses, a deer's stomach biology has adapted to breaking down those low-calorie foods.

That's when feeding pure field corn can cause serious issues. The sudden addition of a large amount of corn in a deer's diet can cause rumen acidosis, meaning their gut gets acidic. The most common result is a bad case of diarrhea, but death can also occur.

Remember, that sudden shot of corn just messed up the stomach of an animal already running a negative energy balance, experiencing cold, deep snows. It's likely trying to develop fetuses, survive its first winter or make it through winter having just lost 25% to 30% body weight.

In other words, those deer are already massively stressed. Making them sick rarely helps. In fact, it can often be what pushes them over the edge.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

You should start seeing the importance of understanding how deer process foods. That comes together especially clearly with feeding deer minerals. There are so many options, ranging from comparatively cheap cattle products at local farm stores to more expensive versions for deer. Heck, prices for deer-specific minerals range wildly. It's no wonder so many question what to use.

This is a case in which you generally get what you pay for. Just as the ruminant nutritionist taught me,



STEVE BARTYLLA

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SPECIAL SECTION

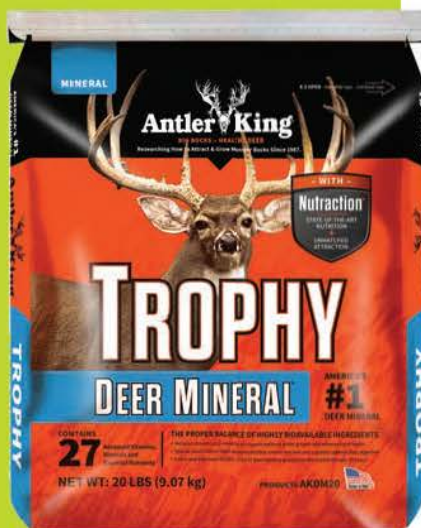
BIG BUCKS, HEALTHIER DEER

Antler King has been providing quality products for whitetail hunters for more than 34 years. One of the company's top products has been its Trophy Deer Mineral, which is America's No. 1 selling premium mineral for whitetail managers.

Featuring more than 25 vitamins, minerals and essential supplements, Trophy Deer Mineral also includes special yeast cultures to promote healthy rumen function and support fiber digestion, allowing maximum absorption of food intake.

To use, empty one bag per mineral site for every 40 to 60 acres per month during the months of January through August. Consumption rates vary according to your local deer density.

Yield: Trophy Deer Mineral is packaged in 20-pound bags.



IMMUNE DEFENSE SYSTEM

Antler King's Power Rack™ is loaded with minerals that are essential for antler growth and building body mass. This supplement also greatly benefits nursing does by improving their overall health when giving birth and increasing milk production.

Deer nutrition experts agree that true deer management begins with the fawns. Power Rack helps boost immune systems and it helps combat disease.

On-the-go hunters and land managers will appreciate the easy-to-use product packaging of this trace mineral product.

Yield: Power Rack is packaged in convenient 5-pound pouches.



MINERAL NECESSITIES

Kandi Kisky is a well-known whitetail manager and big-buck hunter from Iowa. With her husband, Don, she has been growing big deer for decades, and credits the use of minerals as part of their overall success.

"Improving the health of our deer requires a year-round effort," Kisky said. "Our overall mineral approach helps get these deer through the hot summers and the rigors of the rut. Antler King's Apple Burst blocks help provide that."

Formulated by Antler King's deer nutrition specialists, Apple Burst™ blocks promote antler and skeletal growth in bucks, as well as skeletal growth and nutritious milk production for lactating does. The flavoring gives a sweet taste and long-range attraction power. It works year-round in front of trail cameras, as well as near hunting locations.

Yield: One Apple Burst block provides 20 pounds of minerals and vitamins.



it's not what deer eat. It's what they absorb and use that matters. Minerals and vitamins are difficult for deer to break down. In fact, the cattle products pass mostly unabsorbed through the deer's system, merely coming out the backside.

The best deer minerals and vitamin supplements start with the ingredients. If a product has 50% or more salt content, it isn't about improving deer health. It's really just an attractant, as a lot of salt isn't good for deer but is a comparatively cheap attractant. Next, although you can argue about exact ingredients, the best products have a long list.

Additionally, the quality of ingredients means a lot. Chelated minerals are chemically bound to another substance, mirroring how these minerals are naturally consumed in our foods. They are more expensive, but their absorption rate is comparatively much higher, and they are easier on the stomach than nonchelated minerals.

Finally, the best products also include proprietary digestion and health aids. It can't be stated enough — what deer eat is meaningless. What they effectively absorb is everything in the nutrition game.

PUTTING IT TO WORK

Let's see how we can put this together by revealing the methods of overwinter feeding that I use, where legal. As always, this is merely what works best in my situations.

First, let's talk generally. If you're going to feed deer during winter, here are some safe options: Select a commercial deer feed that contains high-quality ingredients and a digestive aid.

If you're feeding corn, add four parts oats to one part corn, or mix the corn with any Antler King mineral or feed, as they include digestive aids. Use high-end deer blocks paired with a top-quality mineral site.

Any of those options can feed deer safely. With that being said,

selecting feeds with digestive aids provides high-quality nutrition and lets deer get more from other foods they consume.

Here's my go-to overwinter feeding method, with each commercial product made by Antler King. I believe — and my experiences have shown — those are the best.

I combine mineral and feeding stations into one. With Amp, a powerful digestion aid, attractants and minerals actually help deer digest all food. Each site contains a Grainiac block with a bag of RackMaker poured on top as a swift recovery food and powerful attractant. To the side, I combine bags of Trophy Deer Mineral and Power Rack. When the minerals or blocks run low, I refresh them, but I generally just use the RackMaker the first time.

This combination is extremely beneficial to the health of deer when they need it most. At the same time, the powerful combo of proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and digestive aids works together to help fawns trying to survive, does developing fetuses and bucks recovering to add muscle and more bone on their heads.

CONCLUSION

Where legal, there's nothing inherently wrong with using attractants that don't benefit the health of deer. But if you want to increase the health of whitetails while attracting them, understanding their digestive system is critical. Deer aren't cattle, as they simply can't break down many of the more challenging foodstuffs that cattle can. It merely passes out the other side.



FOOD PLOTS & MINERALS

SPECIAL SECTION



1. KEY COMPONENTS

Protein and fat content is critical to any deer feed, but so is digestibility. Antler King's new Grainiac™ block is designed to meet those needs and more.

This new block is chock full of corn, soybeans, black oil sunflower seeds and peanuts. On top of those protein and fat sources, AMP™ is added, which is Antler King's® proprietary digestive health supplement to help promote digestive efficiency and immune functions. In fact, AMP™ is the key ingredient that keeps them coming back for more.

Molasses and apple flavoring are infused to give Grainiac™ its sweet taste along with long-range aroma to draw deer from far away. Grainiac's™ high protein and fat levels increase antler growth and help deer maintain much-needed weight during the harsh, cold winters.

Yield: One Grainiac block provides 20 pounds of nutrition.

2. PREMIUM DEER FEED

In areas where supplemental feeding is allowed, gravity feeders are the choice of serious land managers for optimal feed placement. Antler King's new RackMaker® is a premium feed supplement that works great.

This feed consists of highly palatable protein pellets and corn that are coated with a premium blend of soybean oil and molasses for added fat and maximum appeal. RackMaker also includes roasted soybeans and black oil sunflower seeds to provide a higher fat content, which is important during the rut and colder winter months.

The tasty mix also contains AMP™, which is Antler King's proprietary digestive health supplement, that improves digestive efficiency and immune function.

Yield: RackMaker is packaged in 40-pound bags.

3. POWER-PACKED PELLETS

Trophy Deer and Elk Pellets™ are the result of more than 25 years of research working with renowned deer and elk breeders and ranchers.

These protein-packed pellets also include essential minerals, vitamins and yeast cultures that not only aid in growing large antlers and overall body weight, but enhance digestion and greatly improve milk production for lactating white-tailed does and cow elk.

Antler King's® AMP™ is added, which is a proprietary health supplement that promotes digestive efficiency along with immune functions.

The pellets are designed to flow easily through feeders.

Yield: Trophy Deer/Elk pellets are packaged in 50-pound bags.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
FOOD PLOTS AND SUPPLEMENTS
VISIT ANTLERKING.COM

**4.**

4. HASSLE-FREE CLOVER

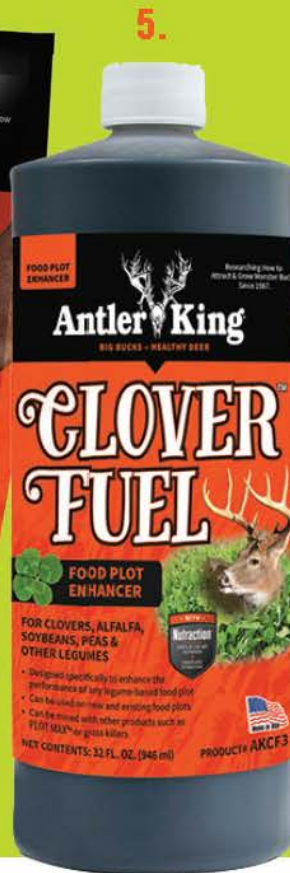
Low pH levels and shady spots are the scourge of any food-plotter. That's why the engineers at Antler King developed Game Changer Clover.

"It's important to have some perennials on every property, and Game Changer is my go-to mix when it comes to kill plots," said Kip Cambell of Red Arrow TV.

The blend includes four varieties of clover, plus rape seed. Game Changer can grow in soils with pH levels as low as 5.0, and it needs as little as just four hours of sunlight to flourish. The perennial can last up to four years. Its shade and pH tolerant characteristics can be planted in those secret remote areas or logging roads where most other food plot varieties struggle.

No heavy equipment is needed as minimal tilling is necessary, and it can be planted in either spring or early fall. Game Changer Clover produces high tonnage that can't be overgrazed.

Yield: One 2.5-pound bag of Game Changer Clover plants 1/4 acre.

**5.**

5. KICKSTART CLOVER PLOTS

Antler King's Clover Fuel™ is the safest, fastest and easiest way to fertilize any legume.

Simply mix with water and spray on soil when planting. After plants are 3 inches high or taller, spray again to increase growth and tonnage. It can also be mixed with Antler King's® Plot Max™ soil conditioner and any herbicide for a one-pass application. Since Clover Fuel only benefits legumes, it won't benefit weeds and other competitive plants. Unlike granular fertilizers that require rain to dissolve and absorb through their root system, Clover Fuel immediately gets absorbed through the soil or as a foliar fertilizer through their leaves and stems.

Yield: A 32-ounce bottle of Clover Fuel covers 1 acre.

**6.**

6. LIP-SMACKING GOODNESS

Healthy deer herds require not only optimal food tonnage, but also the right minerals at the right times. Late winter, spring and summer are the ideal times to provide both bucks and does with the essential minerals needed for antler growth and milk production.

Lick Magic® is Antler King's newest mineral in a bucket. It is loaded with essential minerals and vitamins and is easy to carry and store.

Superior apple flavoring increases its long-range attraction power to pull deer from surrounding properties and onto yours.

Yield: One Lick Magic bucket provides 23 pounds of mineral.