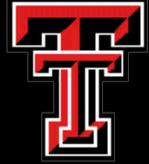




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## BOBWHITE SURVIVAL

### A research update on juvenile Bobwhite survival during late Summer and Fall

By Brad Dabbert

First, I want to thank our many donors who have made 2016 a great year for Quail-Tech. The Burnett Foundation, the Park Cities Chapter of the Quail Coalition, the Cross Timbers Chapter of the Quail Coalition, and the Hill Country Chapter of the Quail Coalition have all contributed to our cause. Additionally, our Anchor Ranches are the bedrock of the Quail-Tech Alliance effort and contribute money, time, and ranch access. We at Quail-Tech are deeply appreciative of all of these entities for their support.

I want to end the year by updating you on our most recent research effort that started in August 2016. Monitoring bobwhite demographics and understanding what factors influence demographic change is a core focus of the Quail-Tech Alliance and the purpose of this research effort. We can all harken back to 2010 when we received relatively good rainfall, but much less than what we expected as far as a positive bobwhite population response to the rainfall. A common statement I heard from landowners is that “We saw significant quail populations present in August and September, but few to no quail in November.” Maybe we expected too much at the time, but the letdown of 2010 followed by the debilitating drought of 2011 has been etched on all of our minds ever since. Unfortunately, little data is available that documents the late summer to early fall movements and survival of

subadult (teenage) bobwhites in the Rolling Plains of Texas. The length of bobwhite telemetry studies are limited by radiotransmitter life; usually 9 to 11 months. Most studies concentrate on the wintering period or a reproductive period that ends in late July or August. These constraints prevent monitoring from occurring during the critical period of late August to early October.

This lack of data is a critical problem, because it deprives us of information that could help to explain the cause of a potential bobwhite disappearance. I announced in a previous newsletter that we had started a project to gather these critical data. Jessica Mehta, the master’s student leading this project, and our crew radiomarked over 100 bobwhites on 5 Quail-Tech Alliance anchor ranches spread across a 100 mile swath of the Rolling Plains so that we could gather this critical piece of demographic data. Only bobwhites that hatched during 2016 were included in this sample of birds. These bobwhites served as the canary in a coal mine warning system to detect and help us explain any potential fall disappearance that might occur. Trapping started August 7, 2016 and bobwhites were monitored through December 1, 2016 on the Clark, Double-Fork, Esperanza, Indian Canyon, and Pitchfork Ranches. *(continued)*



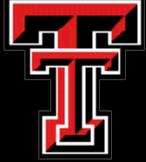
This bobwhite hatched during summer 2016 and was fitted with a radiotransmitter necklace so that we could monitor its movement and survival.



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Fortunately, scenes like this kill site (only the radiotransmitter, leg band, and some feathers are present) were infrequent occurrences during our monitoring period between August 7 and December 1, 2016.



I am pleased to report that survival during this 4 month period was very high, ranging from a low of 70% to a high of 85%. Most mortalities were the result of raptors which coincided with raptor migration through the area, although a few birds were killed by mammals as well. Some birds (and their entire coveys) moved several miles and did not return to the site at which they were trapped. Our excellent survival rate data correspond, of course, with the tremendous success that I hear reported from hunters across the area. We will be replicating this study during August 2017.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and many peaceful days following bird dogs and watching coveys flush into the new year.

## !! Merry Christmas !!

Bobwhites regularly used woody cover, including this lotebush, to shelter them from the hot sun and predators.