



THE

QUAIL-TECH

ALLIANCE

**Supplemental Feeding is an Important Tool During this Drought**

By Brad Dabbert

In our latest newsletter (QT 5.0, July 2011), I detailed the makings of a dismal reproductive year for quail in the Rolling Plains and reported that many birds that were not provided supplemental food had already started to join coveys. Unfortunately, things have not gotten any better. July has come and gone with very little relief. I had hoped Tropical Storm Don would bring us some precipitation, but that was not to pass. Only isolated showers have helped a few areas. Currently, the quail we are monitoring in three different



areas have all stopped their reproductive activities and joined coveys. Only a few chicks have survived to join coveys with them. While a September or October hatch is still possible if rains come during August, recruitment into the fall population is going to be minimal. Managers need to be considering what they have available in their tool box to attempt to shepherd as much of their quail population as possible into what will hopefully be a wetter 2012. Supplemental feeding and predator control are two tools that might be effective. I suggest you spread supplemental feed into the habitat

using a spreader (for more details on technique see the July newsletter). Our data continue to suggest that this feeding method increases northern bobwhite survival during drought. Birds that have access to supplemental feed in our study areas (such as in the photo taken recently) are staying near the feeding trails and relying on this food source. I believe this supplemental feed source will become even more critical after frost. I also suggest you at least consider predator control, especially around stationary feeders if you choose to feed in that way. I do not have data for the Rolling Plains of Texas to support this suggestion. But, in a year when losses to predation are not being offset by reproduction, every bird surviving to the next reproductive season counts. With survival in mind, actual harvest of quail this season will need to be severely curtailed or eliminated altogether depending upon the specific conditions of your area.