

Most Rugged Cowhand May Display Extreme Anxiety In Deer Season

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MERTZON — Earlier this fall when news of out-of-state deer kills began to pour in, it became obvious that all of us here at the ranch were letting the threat of the mid-November Texas season adversely effect our outlook on life.

Furthermore, a witch doctor could have told, without furrowing his brow or rattling one gourd, that not one of us was in shape to hold off a troop of Girl Scouts selling chocolate brownies, much less being in the peak condition necessary to withstand a battalion of red-eyed, red-shorted hunters bent on keeping half the ranch under a constant barrage of high powered rifle fire.

One hand in particular was taking the impending crisis worse than the rest of the boys, so I decided it was my duty to spend a little time consoling him and reassuring him the that the Boss and I were still on his team — even though we were going to allow hunting east of the line camp where he lived.

Of course all us drovers are a bit peculiar; people who are supposed to know claim we're often as temperamental as a mother bear with a migraine headache. So I waited until the moment was right before opening the subject of deer hunting. Shortly after the season opened, the occasion to restore his courage arose.

I opened the speech (or plea) by pointing out that he was magnifying the danger of dozens of clips of 1800-grain mushroom pointed bullets traveling at 2500 feet per second through the 20 or 25 feet of space from his back door to the windmill.

After all, I told him, the chances of a direct hit with a 30-06 was rated by the actuaries away below the odds of being in a head-on crash on the highway — and he was always racing up and down the highway, defying these statistics without giving them a second thought. Instead of allowing me to reveal how much success the doctors are having with new types of sutures, sharp probes and marvelous drugs in treatment of puncture wounds, he snarled that if he'd wanted a perilous job as an unarmed gunfighter he would have gone to England and signed up with the London police, who at least have a billie club for self protection.

To calm him down, I reminded him that we had weathered 16 or 17 deer seasons together, and he couldn't name anything that had ever harmed us, unless he continued to believe those old doctors' tales that living in constant fear of violent death 45 days out of the year would damage the heart if not the brain.

He rudely replied that old doctors' tales suited him just fine. Also, that if I wanted to defend the enemy and turn my back on an old saddle partner, it was my privilege, but not to come crying to him the first time I lost my nerve and was too frightened to leave the house to check the waterings.

This posed a sticky problem indeed. I felt honor bound to help my old partner; I couldn't let him develop a deep-seated phobia merely because of 20 rounds of rifle fire per hour spraying across the country side.

I decided to revamp my approach and confess that both of us would probably sleep better at night if all the Boss' deer were deported to, say Cuba or some other unfriendly country, and if about 50% of the local deer hunter were sent along to be sure the deer were properly choused. For a moment I thought he was going to agree. Then he exclaimed that the 50% figure was far too low, and if he had anything to say about the mater, 80% or more of the hunters should be shipped overseas and the remainder should be licensed only to hunt with a narrow-band slingshot.

I saw there was no use trying further to console him, so I gave him a firm handshake, wished him luck and promised to do whatever I could to protect him.

At this writing we are all unscathed. One pair of prickly pear tumblers had to hug the earth due to a volley or so of lead that happened to be drawn in their direction. But for the most part we are holding up very well, and we all have some hope of living until the close of this season's most thrilling sport — the slaying of the whitetail deer.