

Early Season Scent Strategies

By Todd Amenrud

In the “whitetail world” the time during early season (typically late August into September) is all about being social with other deer. However, they may not be social with the specific deer that you might think. Knowing the social structure of the herd during the time you intend to hunt is a key to getting scent to work for you.

During the time in late summer and early fall whitetail can be very social animals; however, they are primarily social only within their own sex groups. You may see them feeding side by side in an agricultural field, but for the most part the bucks are sociable to other bucks in their bachelor groups, and the doe / fawn family groups are social with other doe / fawn family groups. Testosterone will change things very fast, but for a short while during early season this is the case.

Knowing this to be true, it makes the best sense to use “buck smells” to attract bucks and “doe smells” to attract does or fawns. This obviously is applicable only to “deer smells.” (Scents that actually *come from* deer, like urine, glandular lures or musk type smells) This is not the case for curiosity smells or food lures.

When it comes to older, more mature bucks, they may, or may not, be social with the other bucks. Sometimes older bucks can become very isolated animals. They really don’t need this communal contact like younger bucks do.

In northern regions during the end of August into the beginning of September dramatically increased amounts of testosterone start flowing through the buck’s body, and from this point on he is ready to breed. Contrary to what some may say, it’s the does that dictate when breeding will



actually take place. Bucks will typically remain social with the other bucks until the does exhibit the first signs of coming into estrus.

Although, I've had a positive reaction to an estrus lure during early season, it's probably *not* a good idea to go out opening day and "smack them in the nose" with Special Golden Estrus®. Typically when it comes to "deer smells"

you want to use the smells when they would naturally occur anyhow. As I said, I've had estrus lures work well on mature bucks early in the season. And if you are specifically after a mature buck, it may be a tactic you wish to try, but for most "early season" instances you are probably better off with something else.

There are many ways that you can dispense scent during this period, but two of my favorite tools are; a Pro-Drag® and an Ultimate Scrape Dripper®. The Pro-Drag® is the best tool that I have found to create a scent trail with because it holds a lot of scent and it's easy to control. You can use any type of liquid scent when making a trail, it doesn't have to be a "deer smell," it is all right to use food lures or curiosity scents too.

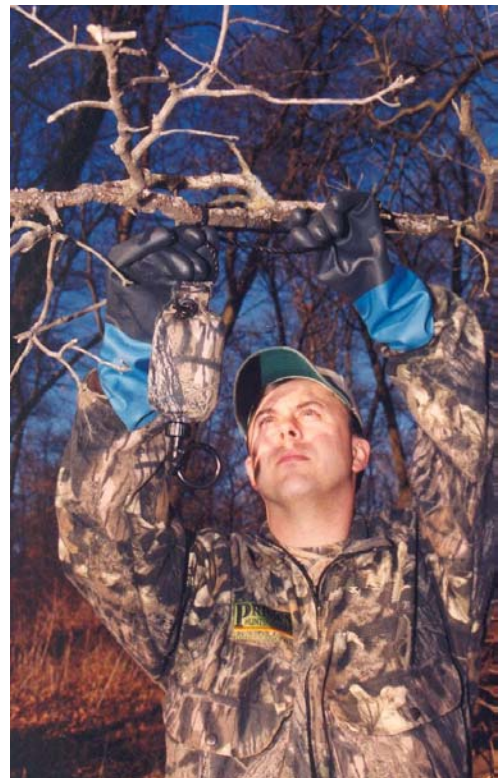
During early season, I've had very good luck with scents like; Trail's End® #307®, Select Doe Urine™, Moon Fire® and Buck-Nip®. There's no doubt that if I had to only pick one it would be Trail's End® #307®, however,

I've had many positive early season encounters with the others that I mentioned.

Where sometimes using mock scrapes too early in the year can be intimidating to some bucks, it may be “just the ticket” for mature, breeding-class bucks. When testosterone enters the picture mock scrapes can be a very effective tactic. Typically the older, more mature bucks will feel an urge to claim, mark and defend breeding territory earlier in the season than the younger bucks.

The Ultimate Scrape Drippers® that are associated with making mock scrapes are great tools for dispensing any type of liquid scent, not just those associated with mock scrapes. This device is heat activated and will drip only during daytime hours, conditioning deer to showing up during legal hunting hours. It doesn't have to be used only at mock scrapes; it works great at dispensing all kinds of scent like food lures or curiosity scent too.

If you happen to be lucky enough to catch your bucks still in their summer patterns they can be fairly predictable. In states like North Dakota their bow season typically opens around Labor Day sometime. In this case they are still in velvet and are usually on a very predictable route and schedule that has more to do with feeding than anything else. In my home state of Minnesota bow opener is usually around the 15th of September and we have to make the most of the first few days of the season. Even after the “testosterone rush” enters the picture, bucks may



still practice these summertime rituals.

However, the testosterone will make them increasingly less predictable.

A scent trail of Trail's End® #307® can be “killer” during this time. One reason why this lure is so effective is because it appeals not only to a whitetail's curiosity but also to their sense hunger and desire to repopulate - you really can't go wrong. If you do catch them in their dependable summer patterns, move fast however, because with testosterone entering the picture things will change very soon.

