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Size Matters in Soybeans ... and Deer Hunting

The big deer of Boone and Crockett tell a soybean tale. Take a NRCS soybean map, county by county, and note the darker greens of heavy production. Overlay the NRCS map with Boone and Crockett antler data and note the parallel. The better the soybeans, the bigger the deer.

A proper soybean variety, served on a food plot plate, is a Cadillac protein source for deer. Eagle Seed Co. has unlocked the genetic doors to ideal forage soybeans: big plants, massive leaves, heavy pods, regeneration and near year-long field presence. When deer walk into an Eagle Seed soybean plot, the kitchen is always open and stocked.



Grant Woods stands beside a tall soybean plot on his land in the Ozark Mountains near Branson Mo. Photo Courtesy of GrowingDeer.tv.

Doyle, sales manager of Eagle Seed, Weiner, Ark., wife Joyce, and a host of family members run a family business originally started by patriarch George Berger that's been selecting unique forage traits over 40 years. Eagle Seed produces a wide range of crop seed, but is particularly renowned for unique forage soybean qualities with glyphosate tolerance.

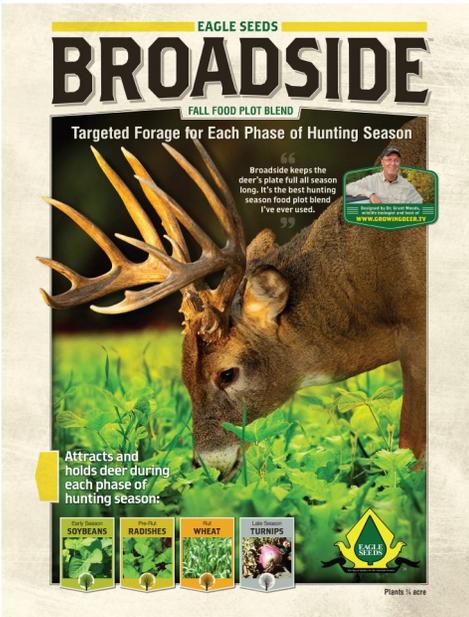
"Our forage beans can regenerate after browsing. Deer can tear off an entire plant in one bite, and most of the time the

plant dies, but our forage beans regenerate new trifoliates and keep growing," he says. "That's very unique and critical for food plot growers." Critical, indeed - particularly when combined with later-maturing (MG 7 or 8), pod-heavy plants cloaked in leaves growing 300% bigger than normal and packed up to a 42% protein level. Plants sometimes reach 84' in height and hold onto pods all the way through food-scarce February. Eagle's forage soybeans translate to an antler factory.

The more time deer have access to food, the greater genetic potential they express. Deer shed antlers before spring – January to March according to geography and nutrition. Bucks bank nutrients and pull them out in summer to develop antlers up until mid to late September. Even in a top soybean state, you can't depend on grain soybeans," Doyle says. "They're cut in September or October, and once harvested, the premium protein source for antler growth is gone."

Greens and Grains

Grant Woods is standing five rows into a food plot nestled in rough, rocky ground in the Ozark Mountains near Branson, Mo., yet he's surrounded by an outrageously lush stand of soybeans. Woods, a renowned whitetail expert and host of GrowingDeer.com, is 6'1", but the canopy climbs over his chest. His series of 2-acre Eagle Seed food plots will grow even higher, pushed on by 30 to 40 nodes shooting off each main stem. Beyond the heavy vegetation, Woods' plots are weighed down by 40 to 60 bu. per acre, plenty of seeds and hulls to provide fodder.



Woods often overseeds Eagle's Broadside wheat, radishes or turnips through the soybean stands. A green and grain buffet is a massive attraction for deer in winter: greens on warm days and grains on cold days. "I've never found a forage bean that is as versatile as far as planting in the North or South, or in poor soils," he says.

The timing of food plot planting should parallel production soybean planting in early spring, depending on region. Woods suggests 80 to 90 lbs. of seed per acre for heavy deer populations to compensate for browsing, and a 50-to-60-lb. rate for plots with lower deer density.

With three forage blends tailored to the North, Midwest and South regions, Doyle recommends an inoculant and soil testing followed with nutrient application.

"Lime as early as possible because lots of plots haven't been in crop production," he says. "Three weeks after planting, hit the plot with glyphosate and do it again three weeks later."

"Diet is crucial and soybeans are one of the best protein sources available," he adds. "Planting the right soybean food plot is truly one of the best hunting techniques."