

# Management and Pricing of Hunting Leases in Oklahoma

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Recreation is big business. Fishing and hunting expenditures in Oklahoma were \$801 million in 2001, ranking between the \$1.9 billion gross income from beef cattle and \$344 million from wheat<sup>2</sup>. Eighty-one percent of Oklahoma hunters pursue deer, while 50 percent hunt small game (quail, squirrel, rabbit) and 31 percent hunt migratory game (dove, waterfowl)<sup>1</sup>.

Recreational access to wildlife is a sustainable enterprise with little price risk. Lease hunting is complementary to most livestock enterprises on native rangeland, though game management requires some compromise to maximum livestock production.

There are advantages and drawbacks for most undertakings, and lease hunting is no exception. Lease hunting may diversify and increase landowner income and provide better control of trespass problems. But lessors have to give up some personal hunting opportunity, and leasing increases liability risk. Lease hunting provides hunters access to a higher-quality experience. By providing landowners incentive to maintain or improve habitat, lease hunting benefits game populations and keeps more land available for hunting.

It is good business practice to employ a written lease agreement. In addition to the obvious names, dates, and terms of payment, the agreement should require harvest records, define harvest limits, include a map depicting boundaries of the lease and any camp locations, describe guest privileges, and include a liability waiver. Wherever land is leased by groups, it is helpful to designate a single hunter to act as liaison to the group for all necessary communication with the landowner.

Harvest records provide essentially free management and marketing information for the lessor. They are espe-

cially important for leases that include deer or turkey hunting or bass fishing. Quality pictures of harvested game or fish can be valuable marketing information for future leases.

Leases can be advertised by word-of-mouth, newspaper ads, Internet sites, magazine ads, at hunting shows, and with brochures or flyers. Common seasonal gross income per acre ranges for Oklahoma leases are: deer, \$1.50 to \$4.50; quail, \$1 to \$4; turkey, 50 cents to \$1; waterfowl, \$25 to \$100; and dove, \$1 to \$3. Market price for leases generally increases as distance to population centers decreases. Advertised price ranges for Oklahoma guided hunts with varying services and length are: deer, \$150 to \$3,500; feral hog, \$125 to \$500; pronghorn, \$1400; dove, \$45 to \$330; waterfowl, \$100 to \$250; pheasant, \$125 to \$225; and quail, \$100 to \$300.

The following publications provide additional information on Oklahoma hunting lease management, including examples of lease agreements.

- Oklahoma Hunting Leases. Available from Judy Vance, Noble Foundation, (580) 224-6480.
- Lease Hunting Opportunities for Oklahoma Landowners. OSU Extension Facts No. 5032.

## Sources

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry and U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics 2001.

## About Grant Huggins

Huggins' involvement with fee hunting began in 1984 during his internship at a corporate hunting camp on the King Ranch. His responsibilities at the Noble Foundation include management of three hunting leases on 7,000 acres. He also assists numerous land managers each year to establish lease-hunting enterprises or improve existing leases.

He enables individual farmers and ranchers of southern Oklahoma and north Texas to better understand wildlife and fisheries management and achieve their goals through consultation, education, research, and demonstration.

His current projects include coordinating the 12,500-acre

Walnut Bayou Deer Management Association in Love County, Oklahoma and Cooke County, Texas, and management of the 7,000-acre Oswalt Road lease hunting project in Love County, Oklahoma, investigating market prices and innovative management techniques for various lease hunting formats.

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