

Evolution of Farming:

Last month, we mentioned that the pheasant brood count was lower than expected. Of course, the next logical discussion involves why that happened. Some folks are wondering whether South Dakota's pheasant population is destined to follow in the footsteps of other midwestern states that have virtually no remaining birds, resulting in very limited hunting opportunities. What happened in other states that decimated the pheasants? How does farming impact pheasant ecology? What can be done to address this potential problem?

Like most other states in the Midwest, South Dakota has a rich farming history. Many family farms can trace continuous ownership by their ancestors for more than 100 years, but economic factors are changing this dynamic substantially. For example, in the previous century, a large tract of land could comfortably provide for an extended family, and the family members all contributed to the daily operations of raising crops and animals. However, when these farms were passed down to the next generation, they were often divided into smaller parcels, sometimes resulting in inadequate pieces of land for supporting the next set of families. There are more than 2 million farms in rural America, about 88% of which are considered small family farms by the USDA. Only 16% of the total value of production results from these farms.



As large-scale and non-family farms began to dominate the landscape, the style and priorities of farming are impacted. Even though Federal programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program



designed to protect natural habitat, provide an incentive for farmers to consider the environment and wildlife, the economic pressures of escalating land prices and crop values are challenging to resist. South Dakota is fortunate to be in a position to benefit from the experiences of neighboring states in understanding the impact of the modernization of farming on upland hunting. In Brule County, some former family farms have been purchased by dedicated hunters with the sole goal of ensuring that

a favorable pheasant habitat is developed and maintained. Similar foresight in other areas of the state should protect South Dakota's bird population from dwindling.

Ammunition Update:

Throughout this year, the shortage of ammunition has been an issue. For a variety of reasons, certain types of ammo and guns have simply not been available from retailers. An increase in demand combined with a decrease in supply is the fundamental cause, although the underlying motivation behind both those factors is debatable. Whether you believe the problem was created by government orders, lack of components, excessive stockpiling or other aspects, the end result was clearly visible on empty shelves at ammunition stores across the country.



Fortunately, ammunition is now becoming widely available. Many stores have instituted limits for customers to ensure a fair distribution, but even these guidelines are becoming more relaxed. Unfortunately, prices remain high but will hopefully decrease as well. At this time, the Dakota Prairie Lodge does not foresee any issues in procuring the appropriate ammunition for our hunters. We choose not to stockpile ammunition unnecessarily as this general practice may have been a factor in the previous shortage conditions.

Opening Day Target Practice!

Public welcome! Shoot clays with us before Rooster Rush.

Catch up with old friends, meet some new ones, we will have complimentary refreshments, awards and prizes. Space is limited so call today!

October 19 from 8 to 10 a.m.

RSVP to 1-855-SD-LODGE or info@SD-PheasantHunting.com



Prairie Puzzle:

The answer to last month's question about the poker hands was full house. Congratulations to first place winner Mr. Lester from Indiana, second place winner Mr. Bourquin from Ohio, and third place winner Mr. Haas.

October question: ***In what year did South Dakota achieve statehood?***

Please submit your answer by October 15, 2013 to be included in the prize drawing for a free Dakota Prairie Lodge & Resort hunting hat. Responses will be accepted via mail, phone, or email. Good luck!