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RELEASES OF PEN-RAISED QUAIL

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As northern bobwhite populations declined over the past 3 decades, increasing numbers of quail enthusiasts have resorted to releasing pen-raised quail. Most state game agencies are no longer directly involved with release programs. Nevertheless, many private landowners continue to make releases of pen-raised quail the center of their game-bird management efforts, rather than focus on habitat improvement and limit their quail hunting to what the carrying capacity of the land will provide. The impact of releasing pen-raised quail in the midst of remnant wild quail populations is not understood. Therefore, managers and biologists should strive to err on the conservative side when considering use of pen-raised quail to provide recreational opportunities. The northern bobwhite is a game-bird resource that is treasured by a diverse user group, and should not be put in jeopardy by massive annual releases of pen-raised stock.

Issue 4.1

PEN-RAISED TO WILD QUAIL DISEASE TRANSMISSION

We have virtually no information on whether liberated pen-raised northern bobwhite transmit disease to wild quail. The extent and dynamics of such processes are virtually unknown.

Strategies (summarized from Landers et al. 1991):

4.1.1-Perform research on potential disease risks for wild quail or other game birds that might be associated with releases of pen-raised quail.

4.1.2-Immediately initiate a program to minimize disease risks by conveying appropriate disease prevention and control practices to producers and users of pen-raised bobwhites.

Issue 4.2

GENETIC MAKEUP OF PEN-RAISED AND WILD QUAIL

There is very little information on the importance of heredity and environment on the production of pen-raised quail for release on private lands. Furthermore, there is little published information on how releases (especially large and widespread ones) of pen-raised quail may affect the genetic integrity of wild quail.

Strategies

4.2.1-Conduct research on relative importance and roles of heredity and other factors (pens, people, contact, etc.) on field behavior of pen-raised quail after release.

4.2.2-Conduct laboratory research to establish genetic make-up of pen-raised quail.

4.2.3-Compare genetic makeup of pen-raised quail to genetic makeup of quail in museum

specimens, or in populations that have not been subjected to releases of pen-raised quail.

4.2.4-Conduct field research on the extent of gene flow from released pen-raised quail to wild quail.

Issue 4.3

GAME FARM QUAIL FOR HUNTING

Nonhunters and the general public seem to have either a neutral or negative perception of game farm production of quail for shooting.

Strategies

4.3.1-Develop materials to explain the reasons for game farm production of quail.

4.3.2-Use extension service and public outreach programs to educate people about the social traditions and other positive aspects of quail hunting.

Issue 4.4

INFLUENCE OF PEN-RAISED QUAIL ON WILD QUAIL

There is virtually no reliable, published information about how releases of pen-raised quail influence movements, habitat use, and social structure of wild bobwhite populations.

Relationships of releases of pen-raised quail to possible excessive mortality of wild quail as a result of increased hunting pressure are not un-

derstood. Furthermore, we do not know if large-scale releases of pen-raised quail can cause a functional and numerical response of predators that will carry over into increased predation on wild quail.

Strategies

4.4.1-Conduct research to determine if released pen-raised quail influence habitat use, movements, and social structure of wild coveys.

4.4.2-Perform field research on predation rates of quail in a variety of experimental situations ranging from wild populations with no released birds to populations that have been subjected to extensive releases of pen-raised quail.

Issue 4.5

PEN-RAISED VS. WILD QUAIL FOR HUNTING

Release and subsequent pursuit of pen-raised quail do not simulate the hunting experience associated with wild quail.

Strategies

4.5.1-Develop methods of producing pen-raised quail that will behave like wild birds under hunting conditions.

4.5.2-Study effects release techniques and cover conditions have on behavior of pen-raised quail. This information can be used to better simulate the experience of hunting wild quail, e.g., covey flushes.

