

# STATEWIDE WHITETAIL RUT DATES

# MISSISSIPPI DELTA

BY JASON MEYER

**W**hen I was younger all of my friends and I wanted to be the one that killed the big 'un on Thanksgiving. Deer camp was always full of people and we were eager to claim bragging rights. Rut during the Thanksgiving holidays was usually a hit or miss. However, it wasn't unusual for good deer to be taken during the holidays. Lots of people were off work and with more hunters, more eyes on the ground and more ground covered, odds were someone would get a good one!

It's officially here, the Mississippi Delta rut! I personally witnessed for the first time this year in Bolivar county, a small 8 point chasing several does across food plots on November 19. Some friends of mine said they saw a few chasing earlier that week. Hunters across the levee on the Mississippi riverside reported the same. The bucks weren't full blown, tongue hanging out, and out of breath, but they were interested. Typically, rut is December 3rd through December 10th, but it is possible the recent cold front we've had may push rut up a few days this year.

There there is what we call the second rut. I've seen deer chasing Christmas Eve well into the new year. I was lucky enough to drop a buck who was just plain love struck stupid! He crashed through the woods sounding like someone driving a Ranger through a cane break, mouth open, drooling and looking for his doe. Man I love it! Heck, I used to get in rut myself when I was in high school and college!

Years ago on December 5th, my wife and I rattled up a nice 8 point after being in the stand just 10 minutes. I ranged him, pinned him and stuck him. I will never forget our conversation that day. She said hunting isn't that hard because all you do sit in the woods! HA!! (She comes from a golfing family).

While I love hunting the rut, some bowhunters say they aren't as fond of it as I. It can be difficult, especially if a buck is already with a doe. Unless you can pull him by calling it's basically fingers crossed she comes by you. Decoys work about 50% of the time. And while I've had good bucks respond to decoys don't be fooled thinking it is a sure thing as in all the hunting shows. Remember, they work throughout the year to get one hunt for your viewing pleasure. No matter your preference, rut is coming! Get out there and have some fun! May all of you have a blessed and safe hunting season. Happy Holidays!

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# SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

BY JEFF WAITS

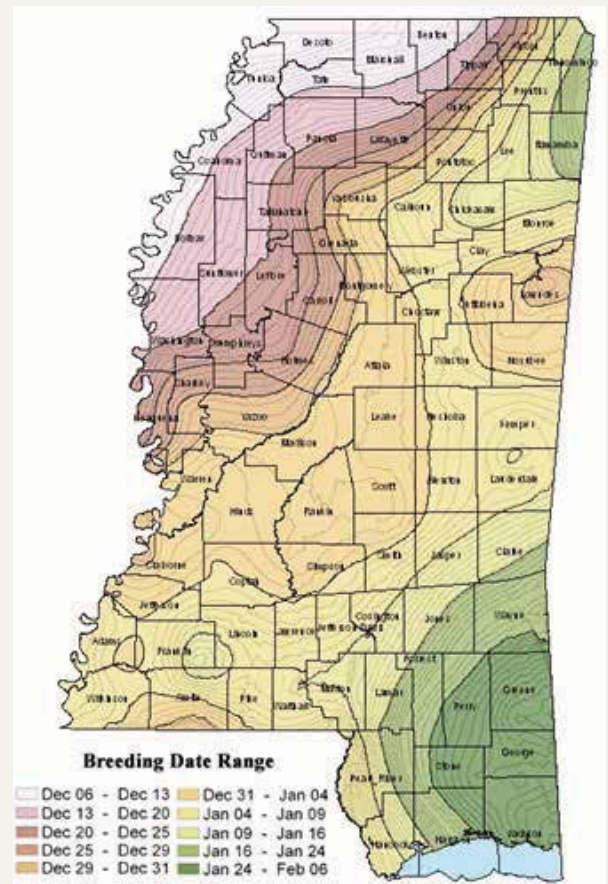
## Timing and Strategy for South Mississippi Region

The southeast zone is quite different from the rest of the state in regard to terrain, agriculture, temperatures and rut cycles. These lower counties experience later rut cycles than other parts of the state with the coastal counties being the latest. Using the breeding cycle calendar from the MDWFP website, peak breeding dates range more than a month long from January 4 - February 6. (<https://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/deer-program/deer-breeding-date-map/>) The differences aren't dictated by latitude differences (north to south) as most of us have been led to believe, but rather are more impacted by longitude differences (west to east). Most western counties in the southeastern zone (Marion, Lamar, Pearl River and Hancock counties) rut dates range from January 4 - January 16. The more central counties (Jones, Forrest, Stone and Harrison counties) are two weeks later ranging from January 16- February 6. The eastern most counties (Greene, George and Jackson, along with parts of Stone and Perry counties) have the latest dates which range from January 24 - February 6. As a matter of perspective, consider the time frame begins a month after northwestern counties have finished.

Rut hunting tactics differ between hunters. Typical methods of hunting scrapes, funnels or travel corridors and calling can all be successful. But the most successful tactic is to hunt where the does are since the bucks are focused on finding estrous does. The most dependable method for most bow hunters is to hunt a food source. Since the rut in southern counties is so late in the year, most food sources have played out which makes green fields the primary food source for bucks and does alike. Whether hunting from a treestand or well-hidden ground blind, food sources can be the ticket to getting that buck during the late southern Mississippi rut!

## Mississippi White-tailed Deer Simulated Mean Conception Dates

<https://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/deer-program/deer-breeding-date-map/>





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## EAST CENTRAL MS

BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY

In east central Mississippi (Eastern highway 82 corridor) the whitetail rut is sporadic like most of the state but if you have to nail down a time to be in the woods its from December 20th through January 1 year-in year-out. The bucks start pre-rut activity around thanksgiving making scrapes and rubs. This activity last through middle December at which time the first does usually cycle into estrous. When these first few does cycle, you will start to see more mature bucks on trail camera for a real short time period, only a few days during early to middle December.

This is an indication at least a doe or two in your area is in heat. I'd say this is one of the most vulnerable times of the rut for a mature buck to do something stupid like walk out into the wide open in daylight. Large percentage of your does will start to come enter their estrus cycle around the 20th of December through January 1st. In most of our region we have plenty of does and



bucks get hard to see except when a doe lures him into a food plot or when he's searching for the next available one to breed. According to research, a large number of twin fawns are sired by different fathers. This tells us something about the whitetail breeding process. A buck breeds a doe, then a bigger tougher buck comes along and takes her from him and breeds her again while she's in estrous. The other buck is then back on the hunt. This period without a doe is when bucks are most at risk during this period. Then after peak breeding period, January 1 on, is when bucks know the end is in sight and they are frantic to find those last few receptive does. This is the time to harvest the most mature buck in your area. The nature of a mature buck one of wise travel routes and times, reserved in behavior, very unlike their young counterparts. When they find a doe, they take her to a sanctuary and control the process. That all applies except when they panic anticipating the end of breeding for another year. Watch your trail cameras, you can learn lots about the status of your local rut. Pre-rut, you will see lots of does, once breeding starts, young bucks and few does and the occasional mature buck. Post rut, the does will be back and you may start to notice strangers, deer you don't know. Consider these dates and thoughts and you will be more successful this year in east central Mississippi.