Maxie Broussard shows off a milo field he planted where dove have been feeding this past week. Dove season begins Saturday and Broussard is expecting some 80 hunters to join him at his farm located off the Verot School Road.

**Broussard’s field of dreams**

Local dairy farm is turned into productive dove magnet

By Philip Timothy

Staff Sports Writer

It’s said a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. In the case of Maxie Broussard, a dove in the field could be worth its weight in gold. And Broussard’s fields are loaded with dove... just three days before the start of the season.

The longtime dairy farmer has transformed 60 of his 120 acre farm, located off the Verot School road, into a virtual dove magnet with 60 acres of fields loaded with brown top millet, milo and sunflowers, an ample water supply, and a thick tree line.

And the doves have responded with huge flocks of birds roosting in the oak and pecan trees surrounding Broussard’s fields. “When I was in the dairy business, I use to plant all of these same crops (brown top millet, milo and sunflowers),” said Broussard, “and we always had plenty of birds.”

“After I shut down my dairy business, I paid someone to plant soybeans. However, they went from bad to worst with no promise of getting better,” he said. “This year I had enough and decided not to plant another crop of soybeans.”

As an avid hunter, Broussard came up with the idea of using his fields for dove hunting from having made past trips to North Louisiana during the Labor Day holidays. “You know every Labor Day we went north for three days for a hunt. Usually we spent a day going, a hunting day and day coming back,” he said. “I use to spend a lot of money and didn’t get a lot of birds in return hunting in fields just like my own fields.”

He didn’t finalize plans to use his own fields until after he read a big article in the Louisiana Sportsman about Terry Shaughnessy and his Hackberry operation. He attempted to book a hunt at his camp, but there was no openings.

Not wanting to return to North Louisiana and with nothing available in Hackberry or locally, Broussard finally decided it would be easier to hunt doves in his own backyard.

“I thought why travel,” he said, “when I have virtually everything I need right here on my farm.”

His began his efforts with a call to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries to find out exactly what needed to be done to make his fields ready to hunt dove under the law.

Recollecting from a Wildlife & Fisheries pamphlet, Broussard was told how to prepare his fields. He found he could plant it, cut it, rake it, bail it, or leave the seed in the field and be within the law.

The only thing he could not do was to harvest the seed and reintroduce it back into the field.

Starting in early June, he began planting his fields. Using a storeroom full of seeds - brown top millet, milo and sunflower - he planted roughly 60 acres before the rains came forcing him to stop.

Yet, despite the weather, he had plenty of seed in the ground and it quickly came up. It wasn’t long afterwards that the doves began to flock to those fields in droves.

“Considering the weather, I’ve done well,” said Broussard. “I wish it was a little bit drier, but I can’t complain, because there’s a lot of birds here right now. I came out to one of my fields the other morning and so many birds left out one tree that it stood shaking.”

“Considering all things, it should be pretty good come Saturday (Sept. 3),” he said. “Not only does Broussard have plenty of birds, but he also has plenty of hunters as some 80 hunters are booked for the opening weekend, which is more than enough to start.”

“Originally, I was only going to take a maximum of 60, but I had a few extra,” he said. “I plan on putting out those big bales of hay as a blind and putting two hunters at each station... 80 stations.”

“I’ve leased the surrounding property around to help protect our hunters,” Broussard said. “So, I think it should be a pretty good hunt, if the weather will just cooperate.”

Broussard’s hunters, who will pay just $40 a gun per day, will be treated to a sausage po-boy and a cold drink while they are registering. Each hunter will be given a ticket, assigned an area and transported out to their spots. Before they leave, there will be a drawing for a free hunt.

Throughout the afternoon, Broussard will have cold drinks and water taken around to each station. Also, Broussard has hired security to insure everything runs smoothly.

“Obviously, there are a lot of people like myself, who were tired of going far away to hunt doves,” he said. “I think this could turn into something big which I wouldn’t mind at all.”

“Should this prove to be successful, I hope to get another 30 acres ready for the second split, so we can spread out the hunts.”

While the opening weekend is booked, Broussard still has openings available for the second weekend as well as the other two splits. To book a hunt or for further information call 232-9785.