Roundup Time In Marshes Nets 157 Louisiana Deer

VENICE, La. (AP) — It was roundup time in the salt marshes of southernmost Louisiana where the Mississippi River spills into the Gulf of Mexico but it was no place for the cowboy and his trusted mount. Just how do you round up more than 100 deer in this remote, uninhabited place?

A team of state wildlife officials and employees did it in the mechanized way — with a small plane, a helicopter, airboats, a marsh motorcycle, a barge, two other boats and two trucks.

They went after the deer which inhabit the spongy "floats" or tiny islands that jut out from the marsh in the federal Delta Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. Here, no hunting is permitted.

Used For Experiment

In two days of intensive work the experts captured 157 deer. They sent 100 to the state of Florida in a trade for wild turkeys. The others were released in another part of Louisiana or used for experiment.

Their methods were similar to the wild west roundups. The operation was well-planned and well-executed.

Delta deer like to spend their days running and gazing on the spongy floats, which are made up of decomposed organic matter which has packed together and vegetation taken root.

At night, they inhabit thin willow ridges bordering the Mississippi River and the various bayous and passes of the refuge.

First, the motorcycle ran the ridges to frighten the deer onto the floats. The helicopter moved in, swooped down and chased them into the water.

Swimming Deer

Right on cue, the airboats came by and crew members grabbed the swimming deer by the tail and back legs and pulled them aboard.

The crews were equipped with radios and used them to inform their colleagues of the location of the deer.

After an airboat was loaded, the deer were taken to the barge. There they were unloaded on a stretcher, tagged, given an injection of antibiotics, and then loaded on the trucks.

Helicopter Key

The key to the successful roundup was the helicopter and the pilot has learned to think like a deer.

He herded a few together by flying the chopper up, down, sideways and backwards. Just like a cowboy, he kept them together by herding off any which tried to break before the herd took to its heels.

Louisiana received 50 wild turkeys for its 100 deer.

"A wild turkey is worth 10 deer," said Allen Ensminger of the state Wild Life and Fisheries Department.

Wild Life and Fisheries Director Leslie Glasgow said wild turkey is the most difficult game species to get for stocking.

"We were happy to get the pure wild turkeys at any price," he said. "With a successful stocking, we in Louisiana could enjoy excellent turkey hunting in most areas within 10 years."