



Packing for 80 on a 7-day trip

EVER WONDER what your mother felt like, packing for the family vacation?

Remembering the essential clothing items for three children, herself and her husband; the toiletries, must-have toys, allergy medications, snacks, first aid supplies; the list goes on. She must pack the car, bearing in mind that those three children, herself and her husband need to fit in there as well. What does this have to do with a deer biologist? Well, during deer season, we pack for more than 30 "families" heading out on a 7-day trip.

Our "families" are deer aging teams, and they're not headed to a vacation destination. After Thanksgiving, they set out to visit deer processors statewide and collect vital data for the deer program. But they are not set adrift in the "ocean" of deer heads on a "raft without paddles," as each team is outfitted with equipment needed to complete the task.

As Deer and Elk Section biologists, we have taken this trip before and, subsequently, we set the itinerary. Trip preparation starts with ordering supplies: 1,263 PGC calendars, 288 packs of AA batteries, 62 boxes of nitrile gloves, 77 containers of disinfecting wipes, 3,967 data sheets, 4,975 medium plastic bags, 705 large plastic bags, 385 Zip- lock bags, 870 zip ties and 705 manila tags. Teams with women need size M gloves; Teams 2, 2A, 7, 17, 19 and 27 need new knives; Teams 2A, 5, 7, 9, 19, 22, 23 and 28A need knife sharpeners. And let's not forget the "vehicle." It takes a month just to gather the more than 60 boxes necessary to deliver these items.

Then there is the packing. Like Mom, when we get going, you better stay out of our way. There are more than 30 deer aging teams, so that means those 4,975 plastic bags need to be divided among them. And don't think it's an even distribution. Like members of a family, each team has unique needs. Team 5 will receive 250 bags, while Team 15 gets only 175.

Packing for annual deer aging activities is another one of those behind-the-scenes duties of a biologist. Funny, I've never seen anybody packing equipment on the Animal Planet channel.

— By J. T. Fleegle