

September 1, 2003

QUAIL “BLOBS”

Contact: Dr. Dale Rollins, (325) 653-4576, d-rollins@tamu.edu

SAN ANGELO – It’s generically referred to as a “blob”, but relax, it’s not the protoplasm pseudopod that engulfed everything in its path and mortified you as a teenager at a 1960s drive-in theater. According to Dr. Dale Rollins, Texas Cooperative Extension wildlife specialist here, this blob is a cross between a blue quail and a bobwhite. And yes, he says it’s genuine, unlike the taxidermy-contrived jackalope.

“Blobs are rare, but if you’ve been raised in areas where the range of bobwhites and blue quail overlap, chances are you know of someone who has shot one, or at least has heard of one,” said Rollins. “In the mid-1980s, Tom Shupe, a research associate for the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Center at Kingsville, trapped a number of blobs on a ranch in Zapata County. About one in 1,000 bobwhites shot on the ranch was a blob. Subsequent trapping and banding on the ranch indicated a hybridization rate as high as 70 per 1,000 bobwhites.

“In my files, I found four published accounts of blobs. One of the incidents was of blobs conceived in breeding pens: the other three were of specimens in the wild. These included specimens from Concho, Stonewall, and Motley Counties, which at the time would have been generally the eastern edge of the blue quail’s distribution in north Texas.

“Blobs are true hybrids, i.e. they are infertile.”

Rollins said blobs usually look like a dirty-faced bobwhite with a crest. However, the crest is not white-tipped like the blue quail’s familiar top-knot.

Rollins asks anyone with a tale or photograph of a blob (or other weird quail) to share, to contact him at d-rollins@tamu.edu or call him at 325-653-4576.