

Edge Feathering – Fencelines/Woody Draws

Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)
University of Missouri Extension – The School of Natural Resources

For:	County:	
Field(s):	Farm #:	
Date:	Tract #:	Acres:
Designed By:	Contact Information:	

EDGE FEATHERING ALONG FENCELINES AND WOODY DRAWS WILL IMPROVE UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT

PURPOSE:

Most fencelines and woody draws in Missouri do not provide adequate shrubby cover at ground level for upland wildlife. In many locations, trees have become too large and have shaded out the annual plants, legumes and small shrubs that quail and rabbits depend on. Additionally, most of these woody draws and fencelines have been invaded by sod-forming grasses like tall fescue and smooth brome. Edge feathering these areas will provide instant escape cover for several wildlife species and promote annual weed and shrub growth within 1-2 years. Edge feathering large trees adjacent to crop fields may also enhance crop yield due to a decrease in competition for light and moisture.



BEFORE - NO COVER AT GROUND LEVEL



AFTER - INSTANT ESCAPE COVER

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Create 0.1 to 1.0 acre of dense woody cover 3-12 feet in height with bare ground underneath per 5-40 acres of wildlife habitat. The minimum size of an area to renovate is 30'x50'. It takes three, 30'x50' areas to equal 0.1 acre. Ideally, 10-25% of wildlife habitat should consist of dense woody cover.
- **Treat existing grass**, especially sod-forming grasses such as tall fescue and smooth brome, with an approved contact herbicide before cutting trees. This will create bare ground and provide good growing conditions for annual food plants and shrubs. Studies have shown that quail will avoid good dense woody cover if there is an understory of sod forming grass. Refer to JS-BIOL-30, Controlling Undesirable Vegetation Job Sheet, for details on removing sod forming grasses.

- Pick at least a 30'x50' area where you can cut **all** trees over 12 feet tall. Leave native shrubs like dogwood or plum if they are less than 12 feet tall. If the shrubs are greater than 12 feet tall, cut them off at ground level and **DO NOT TREAT** the stumps. Cutting down older stems will encourage new shoot growth.
- Cut down trees using only chainsaws or tree shears – no bulldozers. Leave trees where they fall or “windrow” them along the fence or woody draw. Do not push the trees into a dense pile.
- Treat cut tree stumps with an appropriate herbicide to prevent re-sprouting. Do not treat Osage-orange tree stumps when renovating an old hedgerow.
- Edge feather small sections at a time. Cut 50-100 foot long sections spaced out every 150 feet. Continue this process each year until the entire fenceline or woody draw has been treated.



MAINTENANCE:

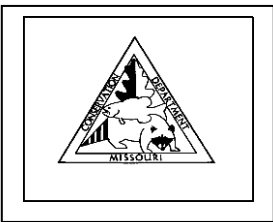
- Exclude livestock from treated areas.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.
- Expect renovated woody draws/fencelines to last 5 to 7 years. Enhance these areas by periodically re-cutting woody sprouts or cut new areas along the woody draw/fenceline.
- Treat invading sod-forming grasses every 3 years.

PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover and food sources for quail and other wildlife.

Consult with NRCS, MDC, or University Extension for additional recommendations.

Comment:



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