

TROUBLESHOOTING HABITAT PROBLEMS

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Bobwhite habitat management involves manipulation of plants which provide cover and food.

When we consider cover we think about three uses; nesting, escape/loafing, and feeding/screening.

Nesting cover is provided by bunch grasses such as little bluestem and should be about the size of a basketball. The density of these grasses should be at least 250 clumps per acre or you should be able to encounter one at every fifteenth to twentieth step.

Escape/loafing cover consists of plants with sufficient canopy to deter avian predators and they are thick enough at ground level to protect the birds from mammalian predators. These plants should be spaced about 50 to 75 yards apart. This allows quick access to cover and birds can feed over a larger area. These same plants also provide shade during hot periods and shelter from cold in the winter. Examples of plants which provide escape/loafing cover include lotebush,

skunkbush, wild plum, bumelia, elbow bush and thick oak mots.

Feeding cover should have enough bare ground underneath to make it easy for birds to find and eat seeds. Feeding cover should be mainly forbs with abundant, large, hard coated seeds. Forbs also support a variety of insects. Some good food plants include western ragweed, sunflower, and croton.

When we put everything together, the key to good quail habitat is plant diversity. By diversity we mean several different species which are distributed in a manner that will provide much edge (the zone where different plant communities meet). Diversity also includes plants of different ages. Plant diversity insures that there are always usable plants present. In a diverse plant community, at any given time there is some plant that is producing seeds, another may be providing cover, while others are attracting insects or hiding eggs.