



Edge Feathering - Fence Lines/Woody Draws

PURPOSE:

Many fence lines and woody draws do not provide adequate shrubby cover at ground level for upland wildlife (Figure 1). In many locations, trees have become too large and have shaded out the annual plants, legumes, and small shrubs that early successional wildlife such as quail and rabbits depend on. Additionally, most of these woody draws and fence lines have been invaded by sod-forming grasses like tall fescue and smooth brome. Edge feathering these areas will provide instant escape cover for many 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 by decreasing competition for light and moisture.



Figure 1. Fence line with little escape cover at ground level.

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 sod-forming grasses such as tall fescue and smooth brome**, with an approved contact herbicide such as glyphosate 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 shrubby cover if there is an understory of sod-forming grass.
- Pick at least a 30'x50' area where you can cut all trees over 12 feet tall. Leave native shrubs such as dogwood, plum, and sumac 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 older stems encourages new growth.
- Cut down trees using only chainsaws or tree shears – no bulldozers. Leave trees where they fall or wind-row them along the fence or woody draw. Do not push 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 fence line or woody draw has been treated.



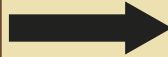
Fenceline from Figure 1, after edge feathering completed

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Half-cutting trees by cutting 1/2 to 2/3 of the way through the trunk leaving a hinge attached so the tree falls over yet remains alive creates an instant living brush pile. Do not treat stumps if this method is used. If vines such as wild grape or green briar are present, they will eventually cover the brush pile further improving its effectiveness. Drop multiple trees on top of one another to increase effectiveness.

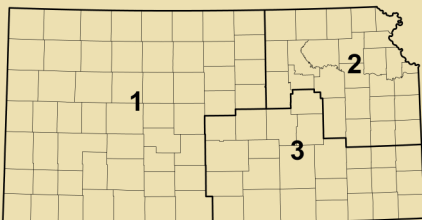
MAINTENANCE:

- Use herbicides to spray invasive cool season grasses such as smooth brome and fescue as needed.
- Expect renovated areas to last 5 to 7 years. Enhance these areas by periodically re-cutting woody sprouts or cut new areas along the woody draw/fence line.



A woody pasture draw needing to be edge feathered.

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