

Quail Covey Headquarters

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 #:
Designed By:	Contact Information:

QUAIL COVEY HEADQUARTERS ARE IMPORTANT FOR QUAIL SURVIVAL

PURPOSE:

Covey headquarters (CHQ's) are clumps of dense shrubby/woody cover with a canopy at least three feet high and little vegetation at ground level. Quail need and use this type of patchy "escape" cover on a daily basis. They use headquarters to avoid hot summer sun and seek protection from predators and harsh weather. Without this habitat component, few quail will be present. This habitat component should be placed next to early-successional vegetation such as managed wildlife friendly grasses/legumes and tilled soil in order to be most effective. CHQ's can be created by planting shrubs, edge feathering, placing downed tree structures, or improving existing shrub thickets.



GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS:

Establish at least 0.1 to 1.0 acre of dense shrubby/woody cover per 5-40 acres adjacent to wildlife friendly grasses/legumes with adequate bare ground. The minimum size of a CHQ is 30'X50' totaling 1500 square feet in size. It takes three CHQ's of this size to equal 0.1 acre. In general, optimum CHQ's are 3'-12' in height. For optimal quail habitat the CHQ's should be no more than 150' apart and adjacent to early successional vegetation such as managed wildlife friendly grasses/legumes, field borders, food plots or cropland. Kill existing grass/vegetation (regardless of type) before installing any new headquarters. Removing this vegetation provides good growing conditions for annual food plants and shrubs. It may be necessary to re-treat any invasive grasses every 2-5 years within and adjacent to CHQ's.

PLANTED CHQ's:

Plant bare root, container grown stock or establish by seed. Preferred shrub species include: gray or roughleaf dogwood, American or Chickasaw plum, blackberry, or shrub lespedeza. Other good species include: hazelnut, elderberry, chokecherry, nannyberry, witch hazel, false indigo bush, or aromatic sumac. Plant a mix of species to provide vegetative diversity. If deer damage is a concern, the following species are recommended – shrub lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii*), aromatic sumac, false indigo bush, and blackberry. Placing shrub protectors around planting stock will help deter deer and rabbit damage. Refer to JS-MO612, Tree and Shrub Establishment job sheet, or similar document for planting details. Shrub lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii* or *L. bicolor*) may be established from seed. Refer to JS-BIOL- 33, Shrub Lespedeza Establishment job sheet for specific details.

EDGE FEATHERED CHQ's:

Edge feathering is used to create woody escape cover along woodland edges, existing tree lines, woody draws, and hedgerows. This creates a transitional zone of downed trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous vegetation between cropland and grassland and the wooded edge. Refer to JS-BIOL-18, Edge Feathering job sheet, for detailed information.

DOWNED TREE STRUCTURE CHQ's:

Downed tree structures are a temporary source of woody cover and can be used where adequate cover does not already exist. Trees used will be well-branched and resistant to decay, such as Osage orange, pin oak, cedar, etc. Refer to JS-BIOL-21, Downed Tree Structure job sheet for detailed information.

EXISTING SHRUB THICKET CHQ's:

Existing dogwood and plum CHQ's can be improved by removing any trees that are adjacent to or overtop the shrubby area. Existing shrub CHQ's should be completely renovated once they attain a height of 15 feet with a chainsaw or clipper. Do not treat the stumps with an herbicide. Cutting down older stems will encourage new shoot growth. Fescue and brome invade many existing shrub CHQ's making them unusable to quail and other grassland birds. These invasive grasses should be treated with an herbicide after the shrubs go dormant in the fall. Re-treat every 2-5 years to keep the grasses suppressed.

MAINTENANCE:

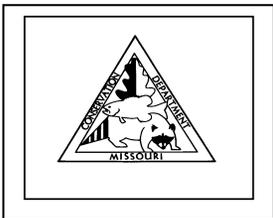
- Exclude livestock from natural headquarters and plantings.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.
- Protect new CHQ's from management practices such as prescribed burning or disking. Plantings should be protected from non-selective herbicide applications.
- Consider marking new CHQ plantings with a permanent marker to help identify these areas when conducting management practices or weed control.

PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover sources for quail and other wildlife.

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

Comment:



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