

COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

The following guidelines may be used when writing specifications for wildlife practices for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse in Colorado. These are guidelines only. They may need to be adapted to individual situations and site requirements.

FENCING TO PROTECT RIPARIAN ZONE

Follow NRCS Practice Standard 645, Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, and 382, Fencing. The objective of fencing riparian zones when sharp-tails are the target species is to protect riparian areas, including seasonally dry and intermittent secondary drainages, so that deciduous shrubs are protected from intensive grazing. These shrubs provide brood rearing and winter habitat for sharp-tails. When these standards are applied for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, the following guidelines may be used.

Guidelines:

Apply this practice guideline in any riparian area, including dry and intermittent stream corridors within Columbian sharp-tailed grouse range. Go to the Natural Diversity Information System at: <http://ndis.nrel.colostate.edu/escop/> for a map Columbian sharp-tailed grouse range.

- Protect 2-3 acre parcels within critical winter ranges to avoid overbrowsing of key deciduous shrubs.
- Livestock water will be developed outside the protected area using either water tanks or water gaps (must be at least 300 feet apart). If water gaps are used, stream must be stable and hardened access is required.
- Minimum size of the zone will be 15 feet wide on each side of the channel. Preferred width is 20-50 feet on each side of the channel.

GRAZING SYSTEMS TO ENHANCE MOUNTAIN SHRUB COMMUNITY

Follow NRCS Practice Standard 645, Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, and 528A, Prescribed Grazing. The objective of using a grazing system to enhance mountain shrub communities when sharp-tails are the target species is to increase height density and to improve the composition of the grass, forb, and shrub components of the mountain shrub community. These plant communities provide important general habitat for sharp-tails. When these standards are applied for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, the following guidelines should be used.

Guidelines:

Apply this practice in native mountain shrub communities where Columbian sharp-tailed grouse are currently found or where there is potential for them to occur. Go to the Natural Diversity Information System at <http://ndis.nrel.colostate.edu/escop/> for a map Columbian sharp-tailed grouse range.

- Defer at least 20% of the ranch from year-long grazing.
- Follow NRCS standard 528A, Prescribed Grazing, on the rest of the pastures.

PRESCRIBED BURNING

Follow NRCS Practice Standard 645, Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, and 338, Prescribed Burning. The objectives of Prescribed Burning when applied for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse are to control undesirable vegetation, to create and maintain openings in dense stands of shrubs, and to enhance the shrub and grass production in key mountain shrub communities. The end result will be to maintain a desirable juxtaposition of grass, shrubs, and forbs in these key mountain shrub communities. When these standards are applied for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, the following guidelines should be used.

Guidelines:

- Apply this practice in areas where undesirable vegetation dominates the landscape or where stands are monocultural to the point where they no longer provide quality nesting, brood rearing, and winter cover for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.
- Fire will be prescribed for small (<100 acres) parcels where the shrub community dominates the landscape and is at climax or near climax stage within Columbian sharp-tailed grouse range.
- Fire will be prescribed in areas that are dominated by undesirable vegetation as determined by local DOW personnel.
- Prescribed burns will be applied at 3 to 5 year intervals or at an interval based on site-specific needs that will help establish and maintain the desired vegetative components.
- All safety and liability requirements will be addressed when planning prescribed burning.