

Quail Covey Headquarters

Job Sheet

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

Landowner:	Farm #:
Field(s):	Tract #:
Date:	County:
Contact:	

PURPOSE:

Covey headquarters are clumps of dense shrubby 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.



SPECIFICATIONS:

- Establish at least 3 Covey Headquarters per 5-40 acres adjacent to wildlife friendly grasses/legumes and tilled soil.
- Maintain natural headquarters by removing trees that overtop the shrubby area.
- Edge feathering can be used in areas of older trees to restore and enhance shrubby habitats.
- Headquarters shrub plantings should be at least 30 feet wide and 1,500 square feet.
- Plant shrubs 5 X 5 feet.
- Plant bareroot or container grown stock. Preferred species include: gray or roughleaf dogwood, American or Chickasaw plum, blackberry, false indigo bush, or shrub lespedeza. Other good species include: hazelnut, elderberry, chokecherry, nannyberry, witch hazel, or aromatic sumac. A mix of species provides vegetative diversity. If deer damage is a concern, the following species are recommended – false indigo bush, shrub lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii*), aromatic sumac, and blackberry. If other species are planted in areas of high deer populations use deer damage protection techniques. Consult you local USDA office.
- Entire planting area needs to be free of existing vegetation. Remove unwanted cover either by disking or chemical treatment during the fall prior to shrub planting.
- Prior to spring shrub planting, broadcast ladino clover at 2 ¼ lbs./acre or annual lespedeza at 5.6 lbs./acre to suppress annual weeds in the planting area. The shrub area may also be sprayed with an approved herbicide for at least two growing seasons after planting.

❑ **Establishing Shrub lespedeza from Seed**

- ❑ *Lespedeza thunbergii* (VA-70 or *Lespedeza bicolor* (Natob) are the preferred varieties for Missouri.
- ❑ Seed must be inoculated at the time of planting and scarified seed is strongly recommended.
- ❑ Seed can be planted as soon as frost danger has passed. A clean, well-prepared seedbed is essential for successful establishment.
- ❑ Seed can be broadcasted at the rate of 10 PLS pounds per acre. Roll the planted area to ensure soil to seed contact at ½ to 1 inch deep.
- ❑ Seed can be direct seeded by drilling 7 PLS pounds per acre ¼ to ½ inch deep. Block drill gates to make rows 3-4 feet apart.
- ❑ Maintain shrub lespedeza plantings the first year by mowing weeds when they grow to a height of 18 to 24 inches. Mow back to the height of the lespedeza seedlings.
- ❑ Mow or burn established shrub lespedeza plots in February or March before new growth begins. This should be completed every 3-4 years. These practices will help maintain the vigor of the stand, stimulate growth, and eliminate leaf litter. If mowing is used, 6 to 8 inches of stubble should be left and a follow-up burn to remove the ground residue.
- ❑ Shrub lespedeza is especially suited for use adjacent to crop fields or areas that will be tilled/sprayed. In areas of little or restricted management care should be taken to control any spread.

MAINTENANCE:

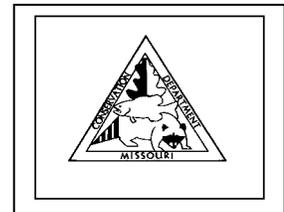
- ❑ Exclude livestock from natural headquarters and plantings.
- ❑ Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.

PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover sources for quail and other wildlife.

Consult with NRCS or MDC wildlife biologists and private land conservationists, or University Extension for additional recommendations.

COMMENTS



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