

Control brush to improve wildlife habitat

Control brush to improve deer, dove, quail, turkey and other wildlife?

"Yes," says Connie Fair, District Conservationist with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Columbus.

According to Fair, there are over 39,641 acres of range and pastureland in the Colorado County Soil and Water Conservation District which his office serves that are invaded by noxious woody plants so thick that growth of good food plants for wildlife is limited.

"Selective brush clearing with many small, natural looking openings allows sunlight to reach the ground surface and removes the competition for moisture so better food plants can grow. More available food means wildlife is healthy and can increase in numbers. The opening also grows more grass for livestock.

"Deer and other wildlife will still use grassland after any type of pattern is installed," he said. "The landowner must decide which type of pattern will best fit into his livestock and wildlife operation."

Wildlife habitat can be improved in some brushy pastures by thinning the stand of brush rather than by strip or pattern control.

By using an axe, bulldozer or other means, useless trees and brush can be removed and desirable browse plants left.

Thinning lets more sunlight reach low-growing plants.

Running oak, some of the acacias such as catclaw and blackbrush, and several other good browse plants can often be profitably burned or shredded to keep them within reach of the animals and promote regrowth. Tender new shoots are much better feed than old mature growth.

Burning or shredding every three or four years maintains plenty of choice food for deer and livestock. Shredding or burning also temporarily increases the amount of forbs and grasses.

Habitat for quail, cottontail rabbits and other small animals can be improved by piling or stacking brush removed from treated areas. Brush piles, though temporary, are ideal cover and help to increase the number of quail and other animals on cleared pastures.

Many types of wildlife exist besides the few we think of most often, such as deer, turkey, quail and dove.

The ecological role of predatory animals, furbearers and others are not understood by most people; therefore, they do not consider them important.

Habitat management for some of these other important, yet less publicized, types of wildlife should be part of any brush management program.

Trees and underbrush should always be kept along streams and bottomlands to provide protective cover, den sites and fruit and berry production for these animals.

Treatment of land said to be vital for deer habitat

Hunters are often falsely accused of causing declining game populations, but treatment of the land has a much greater effect on the number of game animals than does hunting pressure.

The basic habitat requirements

for most wildlife is a year-around supply of food and water plus a safe place to hide, rest and raise young.

Wildlife is usually found on properly treated rangelands where the primary grazing animals are domestic livestock such as cattle.

Rangelands which provide adequate food, cover and water.

Need place to hide

Wildlife like the whitetail deer need a place to hide from their enemies and to raise their young.

They prefer to remain in secluded areas during the day and then venture out into the open during the evening, at night and during hot weather and out of the wind and cold during winter months.

Wildlife, such as deer and quail, do not prefer vast expanses of unbroken wooded areas. They are much more at home where there are frequent clearings and open areas interspersed with woody plants.

They are often referred to as edge animals because they do much of their feeding in the open but near the edge of brush, trees and overhead escape cover.

Deer, especially, prefer openings which provide more forbs and other succulent food plants, while nearby woody cover provides a place to hide out quickly if the need arises.

Even though brush is important to deer, too much brush, as well as too little, may be a disadvantage.

Brush can be cleared in an al-

ternate sequence so that a pattern for wildlife can be established.

This alternate brush open area pattern enhances growth of grasses and forbs as well as provides escape cover for deer. These patterns are beneficial to both deer and livestock.

As a landowner, you must decide which type of brush pattern will best fit your livestock and wildlife operation.

You must determine the proper width of brush strips and open areas to balance livestock forage with brush and browse cover for deer and other wildlife.

Kinds and amounts of browse plants as food sources for deer must be evaluated also.

Many sportsmen will pay premium lease rates to hunt on land where the brush has been cleared in strips or patterns.

Keep coolers clean, odor-free

Proper cleaning and odor removal can be especially important when using a cooler to transport fish or game.

Below are some helpful tips from the Coleman Company for keeping coolers clean, odor-free and ready for the outdoors whenever you are:

- After each use, clean all inside and outside surfaces with a sponge or absorbent cloth, using (See Coolers, Page 22)

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ter's prairie chicken. Among the migratory species which use the refuge are large numbers of waterfowl, white tailed hawks, crested caracaras and roseate spoonbills.

There is also a chance you may see one of the bison recently added to the Refuge.

Resident species often seen are white tailed deer, armadillos, bobwhite quail and skunks. Several species of snakes also make their homes there.

The general public may observe and photograph many of the species along the refuge's five-mile automobile tour route and/or two walking trails.

Unfortunately, the chances of seeing an Attwater's Prairie Chicken are very slim due to recent declines in their population.

Tours may be arranged by calling 409-234-3021.

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Attwater

was expanded to include a diverse array of habitats including wetland, riparian and others.

The centerline of the San Bernard River forms the eastern bound-

dary of the refuge. Boundary signs mark fences and indicate unauthorized entry is prohibited.

The refuge is home to many species in addition to the Attwa-

HUNTERS

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