

# Quail Covey Headquarters

## Job Sheet

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

<b>For:</b>	<b>County:</b>
<b>Field(s):</b>	<b>Farm #:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tract #:</b>
<b>Designed By:</b>	<b>Contact Information:</b>

### QUAIL COVEY HEADQUARTERS ARE IMPORTANT FOR QUAIL SURVIVAL

#### 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 0.1 to 1.0 acre of dense woody cover per 5-40 acres adjacent to wildlife friendly grasses/legumes with adequate bare ground. The minimum size of a Covey Headquarters (CHQ) is 30 feet wide and a total of 1500 square feet in size. It takes three CHQs of this size to equal 0.1 acre. In general, optimum dense woody cover is 3'-12' in height. For optimal quail habitat the CHQs should be no more than 150' apart and need to be next to early successional vegetation such as managed wildlife friendly grasses/legumes, field borders, food plots or cropland.
- Maintain existing headquarters by removing trees that overtop the shrubby area. The area around and underneath a CHQ needs to be kept free of heavy grass cover. Re-apply herbicide and/or mechanical disturbance as needed (every 3-5 years or sooner) to keep grasses suppressed. These existing CHQs may be expanded by controlling competing vegetation and allowing shrubs to spread through sucker sprouting or seed.
- Edge feathering can be used in areas of older trees to restore and enhance shrubby habitats. Trees may be either girdled and left standing, or dropped (but not piled) to provide immediate cover. Using bulldozers to create these areas greatly reduces their value. Refer to JS-BIOL-18, Edge Feathering job sheet, for detailed information.
- Downed tree structures can be used to provide immediate woody cover 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. Trees used to create these structures should be cut with a chainsaw or clipper. Refer to JS-BIOL-21, Downed Tree Structure job sheet for details.
- Kill existing grass/vegetation (regardless of type) before installing any new covey headquarter. Planting area needs to be free of existing vegetation.

- Plant bare root 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. Refer to JS-MO612, Tree and Shrub Establishment job sheet, or similar document for planting details.
  - For bare root stock, plant on 5' by 5' spacing (77 shrubs per 30' by 50' planting). Container trees are planted on a 7' by 7' spacing (40 shrubs per 30' by 50' planting). A minimum of three species will be used.
  - Plant additional shrubs if less than 50% of the seedlings survive after the second growing season.
- Shrub lespedeza (either *Lespedeza thunbergii* or *L. bicolor*) may be established from seed. Refer to JS-BIOL-33, Shrub Lespedeza Establishment job sheet for specific details.
- To suppress annual weeds consider broadcasting ladino clover at 3.0 PLS lbs/acre or red clover at 6.1 PLS lbs/acre prior to shrub planting or installation of downed tree structures or edge-feathering. Newly installed CHQs may also be sprayed with an approved herbicide for at least two growing seasons after establishment.

**MAINTENANCE:**

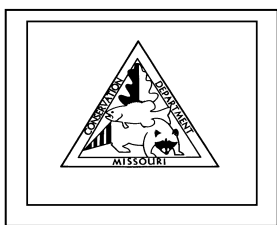
- Exclude livestock from natural headquarters and plantings.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.
- Renovate over mature shrub thickets by cutting down the largest shrubs at ground level. Do not treat the stumps with an herbicide. Cutting down older stems will encourage new shoot growth.
- Protect new covey HQs from management practices such as prescribed burning or disking. Plantings should be protected from non-selective herbicide applications.
- Consider marking new covey HQ 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:



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternate means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC, 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.