



Habitat Management Fact Sheet

January 2015

Edge Feathering

Edge is a transitional zone between two or more different habitat types that gradually change from one type of vegetation to another. These transitional zones are essential in today’s agricultural landscapes and provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife species. The quality and amount of edge habitat can directly affect the quantity of bobwhite quail on your property.

Edge feathering, also known as "hinge cutting," turns trees into shrubby habitat for quail and other upland wildlife. The purpose of edge feathering is to create habitat

that provides both shrubby and weedy areas throughout these transition zones. Quail require dense woody cover to escape predators and survive harsh winters. However, most field edges are abrupt changes from cropland to mature trees.

A gradual transition from crop field to mature trees should consist of shrubs and a mixture of native grasses and broadleaf plants. These areas should be at least 30 feet wide gradually blending into each other. Landowners can create this transition zone by hinge-cutting small patches of undesirable trees along the field edge without sacrificing agricultural acres.

Edge feathering is a great way to create quality woody habitat along field edges by increasing dense woody cover for quail and improving crop yield in previously shaded areas. Trees to consider for edge feathering include eastern red cedar, elm, mulberry, ash, Russian olive, locust and any other species identified by your local biologist.



Edge feathering is one of the easiest ways to create woody cover for quail. Hinge cut smaller trees for the best results.



Field without edge feathering. Notice the abrupt transition from field to trees.

Common species that are capable of re-sprouting.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Ash, Green	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
Ash, White	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>
Elms	<i>Ulmus</i> spp.
Maples	<i>Acer</i> spp.
Mulberry	<i>Morus rubra</i>
Honey Locust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>
Russian Olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>

INTERESTING FACT

8.5 Average life expectancy of a bobwhite quail in months.



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Allowing weeds to grow up around the downed tree is essential to the success of the project. For best results, spray out brome around and under these areas.



Avoid pushing trees into dense piles. Leave the trees where they fall or windrow them along the edge of the field.

Specifications for Edge Feathering

- Provide 0.1-1.0 acre of dense woody cover per 5 to 40 acres of wildlife friendly habitat. The minimum size of an area to edge feather is 30'x50', but 50'x100' is preferred. Edge feathering should be completed on trees with a diameter >6 inches and in blocks or linear strips along a field edge .
- Try to leave trees where they fall. Edge feathered trees should be dropped parallel to the field edge or cut and loosely stacked along the edge of the field. Do not push the downed trees into a dense brush pile or stack trees.
- Treat the cut stumps of undesirable trees, shrubs, and vines with an approved herbicide to prevent re-sprouting. See Table 1 for tree species capable of re-sprouting. Leave native shrubs, like American plum and chokecherry.
- If sod-forming grasses or undesirable species are present (such as smooth brome), treat with an approved herbicide prior to edge feathering. Herbicide

applications should be used in the late fall after the leaves have fallen from any existing desirable shrubs, and while the grasses are still green and actively growing.

- Periodic follow-up treatments every 3-5 years may be required to maintain the herbaceous annuals and perennials within and adjacent to your feathered edge .

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Through a partnership with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, wildlife biologists are available to help provide wildlife habitat guidance, technical assistance on the available conservation programs and design seeding mixtures.

For more information visit NebraskaPF.com or call 844-733-3669.



Consider edge feathering along wooded areas that are in close proximity to other habitat components beneficial to bobwhite quail.



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