

Edge Feathering-Forest Edge

Job Sheet

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

For:	County:
Field(s):	Farm #:
Date:	Tract #:
Designed By:	Contact Information:

PURPOSE:

Many wildlife species need dense shrubby/woody escape cover on a daily basis. Without this habitat component many wildlife species will be absent. Most field edges are abrupt changes from grass or crops to mature trees. Edge feathering is used to create woody escape cover along forest edges. This creates a transition zone of shrubs, vines, and herbaceous vegetation between cropland or grassland and the wooded area. To be effective, edge feathering should be completed next to early successional vegetation such as managed wildlife friendly grasses/legumes, field borders, food plots or cropland.



SPECIFICATIONS:

- Create 0.1 to 1.0 acre of dense woody cover per 5-40 acres of wildlife friendly habitat. The minimum size of each resulting brushy/shrubby area is 30'X50'. It takes three 30'X50' areas to equal 0.1 acre.
- Kill existing grass/vegetation (regardless of type) wherever trees will fall, with an approved herbicide before edge feathering. This provides for instant usable habitat and good growing conditions for annual food plants and shrubs.
- Edge feathering may be completed in blocks or in long linear strips along the field edge.
- Pick an area to edge feather where all existing trees can be cut, so to avoid valuable timber or mast producing trees.
- Cut all trees over 15' tall in the area to be edge feathered. Cut all stems over 1" in diameter.
- Treat all cut stumps (except cedar) with an approved herbicide to prolong the benefits of edge feathering. Leave native shrubs like dogwood and plum if they are less than 15 feet tall. If they are greater than 15 feet tall, cut them off at ground level and DO NOT treat the stumps. Cutting down older stems will encourage new shoot growth.
- If possible, leave felled trees where they fall. Edge feathered trees may be dropped parallel to the fence line/field edge or cut and loosely stacked along the edge of the field. Do not push the downed trees into a dense brush pile.
- Edge feathering may be completed with a chainsaw or mechanical clipper.

MAINTENANCE:

- Exclude livestock from edge feathered areas.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.
- Edge feathering can be expected to provide quality dense woody cover for 5-10 years. The area should be re-treated when at least 50 percent of the re-growth exceeds 15 feet tall.

PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover and food sources for quail and other wildlife.

Consult with NRCS, MDC, or University Extension for additional recommendations.



Without Edge Feather

Note the thick grass cover next to the forest edge and the abrupt transition from grass to forest.



With Edge Feather

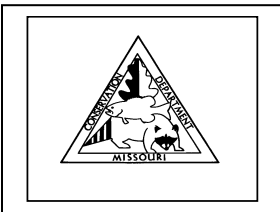
Note the trees felled along the edge. The loose row of felled trees provides excellent cover and overhead protection. The heavy grass under the trees is dead.



Open Ground Cover in Edge Feathered Area

Note the growth of annuals and the open ground under the felled trees. This is the desired result.

Comment:



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