

Maximizing wildlife benefits on CRP grasslands

The Conservation Reserve Program offers a unique opportunity for landowners to increase wildlife diversity and numbers on their own land. To maximize these benefits, you need to carefully plan, establish, and maintain your seeding.

Cool season grasses like brome grass make good nesting cover, especially if they are seeded with a legume such as alfalfa. Tall fescue, crown-vetch, and birdsfoot trefoil are less desirable species that should not be used if you hope to maximize wildlife benefits.

Seeding establishment is critical to assure future wildlife dividends. Toward that end, following SCS guidelines is important. Clipping the field twice during the establishment year will improve seeding vigor and reduce competition from annuals. First year seedings are not as attractive to nesting birds; so, mowing in the establishment year destroys relatively few nests. It will make the field more attractive in later years. Good establishment will reduce noxious weed control expenses in future years, too.

In the years following establishment, cool season grasslands should be left undisturbed from April 1 to August 1 to avoid destroying nests. Annual mowing is not necessary. If mowing is ever needed after a few years, to maintain seeding vigor, mow only between July 15 and August 15. This will restrict disturbance to late in the nesting season and allow 8-10

inches of regrowth for next spring's nesting cover.

Control noxious weeds by spot mowing or spot spraying. Some undesirable species such as foxtail actually serve as a nurse crop and need no control. The established perennials will eliminate the problem. So, be sure to know what weed species is present and time your treatment to effectively control

that species. A trip to your extension specialist can save you time and money.

Remember, pheasants and other ground nesting wildlife need undisturbed cover to nest successfully. Contact your Department of Natural Resources biologist or SCS district conservationist for further details and assistance.

Louisa County Soil Commissioners to meet

The Louisa County Soil Conservation District Commissioners will meet at 8 p.m. on Monday, May 16, at the office located at 222 North Second, Wapello.