



Establishment of Brood rearing habitat on prevent plant acres

Pilot Project For South Dakota Pheasants Forever Chapters

Overview

During the first few weeks of life, pheasant chicks consume primarily protein-rich foods such as insects and other invertebrates. Large amounts of protein are required for development of muscles, organs and feathers in rapidly growing pheasant chicks. When broods first depart from the nest, the hen will lead her chicks to habitat with good overhead cover, an open understory, and an abundance of insects. Overhead cover provides visual concealment from predators and shade from the summer heat. An open understory assures that fragile pheasant chicks can navigate and search for food. Favorable brood habitat is usually associated with diverse mixes of grasses and forbs. Brood habitat is specific in nature, but represents an often overlooked necessity in the critical life cycle of young pheasants.

Broods that have access to high quality brood habitat exhibit smaller movements and faster growth rates, both of which contribute to higher survival. Ideally, brood habitat should be located in close proximity to nesting cover. Habitat improvements aimed at providing better brood habitat is an excellent way to boost pheasant production in your area.



South Dakota

Hundreds of thousands of acres in crop ground are left idle or are kept black during the growing season that were claimed as prevent plant. These areas often times are under 5 acres in size and are dotted across the landscape. If these areas were strategically planted to a cover crop cocktail mix, these acres could provide excellent brood rearing habitat increasing chick and hen survival therefore boosting overall pheasant production throughout the state.

Project Proposal

Local chapters identify 2-3 landowners prior to spring planting that would be willing to plant a select cover crop mix on his/her prevent plant acres to be planted in the month of June

Chapters would pay for cover crop seed and potentially provide labor to establish plots with an ATV and broadcast seeder

Site will be monitored by landowner, chapter members and local farm bill biologist to evaluate establishment, insect production and use by wildlife

Landowner can choose to harvest/terminate plot after Sept. 1

Cover Crop Mixes

Cover crop mixes can also provide many soil health and economic benefits to the participating landowner.

Additional benefits can include but are not limited to:

- Reduction in weed control costs (Tillage and Herbicide)
- Reduction in fertilizer use if legumes are incorporated into the mix
- Additional forage for livestock
- Improved infiltration
- Increase in organic matter and soil fertility

Sample Mix

Standard "cocktail" mixes will range from \$15-\$30 an acre, these mixes can easily be established with a simple broadcast seeder and drag, boosting overall pheasant production throughout the state.

Estimated Cost: \$26/acre

Legumes:

Cowpeas 3 lbs | Sunn Hemp 1 lb | White Clover 1 lb

Grasses:

Sudangrass 2 lbs | Pearl Millet 2 lbs | Proso Millet 2 lbs

Brassicas:

Radish 1 lb | Turnip 1 lb

Other Broadleaves:

Sunflower 1 lb | Flax 5 lbs | Buckwheat 4 lbs



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