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## RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

# Quail Habitat Basics

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**U**nderstanding the relationship between quail and their environment, and how to carry-out habitat management in a way that's consistent with the behavioral, physiological, and morphological adaptations of quail are critical to increasing quail populations. In this article, I included brief descriptions and photos of multiple plant communities that make-up the quail's environment. Successful quail management requires the provision of all these plant communities; furthermore, the various plant communities should be arranged across the managed landscape in a way that is consistent with the adaptations of quail.

### Nesting Habitat

Suitable nesting habitat contains relatively dense, upright native grasses with bare ground underneath the grass canopy to facilitate movement and access to food. Quail will construct nests at the base of native grass clumps, using grass debris from the previous growing season. Pine needles may be used for constructing nests that are located in pine forests. Nesting habitat should be mixed with or in close proximity to brood rearing habitat.

### Brood Rearing Habitat

Brood rearing habitat is characterized as an annual forb (weed) community with an abundance of insects and bare ground that allows chicks to move along the ground unimpeded to secure insects. The annual plant community should be tall enough to provide overhead cover for protection from predators and inclement weather. Brood rearing habitat should be mixed with or in close proximity to nesting habitat.



Rotational strip-disking is used to create and maintain nesting and brood rearing habitats in an old field.



Prescribed fire is used to maintain this native grassland community for quail.



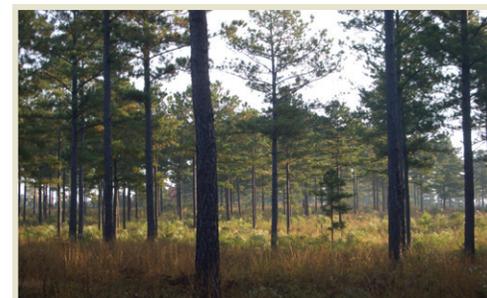
A field border is one of several conservation buffer practices that can be used to create usable space for quail in an agricultural system.



Prescribed fire is used to maintain suitable nesting habitat in this post oak-hickory woodland.



This young, shrubby/woody cutover provides feeding, winter roosting, and loafing and escape cover habitats for quail.



Thinning, hardwood removal, and prescribed burning are techniques that are used to create and maintain loblolly pine habitat suitable for quail.



### Loafing and Escape Cover

Loafing and escape cover are characterized as shrubby/woody vegetation that provides dense overhead cover and is open at ground level. Loafing and escape cover are needed year-round and should be located in close proximity to other habitats. When a covey is flushed, a patch of shrubby/woody vegetation should be just a short flight away (approximately 100 yards) to escape predation. Shrubby/woody vegetation provides protection from inclement weather such as summer heat, rain, and cold temperatures and wind.

### Roosting Habitat

Roosting habitat during periods of mild weather consists of herbaceous (grassy/weedy) vegetation that is open overhead. Quail will often select areas with woody vegetation for roosting during periods of cold weather. Suitable roosting habitat should be located close to feeding areas.

### Feeding Areas

Feeding areas provide quail with adequate food resources year-round. Feeding areas should consist of a diverse community of plants that includes succulent vegetation, insects, annual forbs (weeds), legumes, seed producing shrubs, and fruit and seed producing vines. Because quail are weak scratchers, feeding areas should have very little to no debris on the ground so quail can locate and access food.



An annual forb (weed) community produces an abundance of insects that are essential for the growth and survival of quail chicks.



This young longleaf pine plantation provides year-round habitat for quail.



If managed properly, right-of-ways can provide an abundance of food and cover resources for quail.



A Bermudagrass pasture was converted to a mixture of native grasses and forbs for quail.