

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Guide

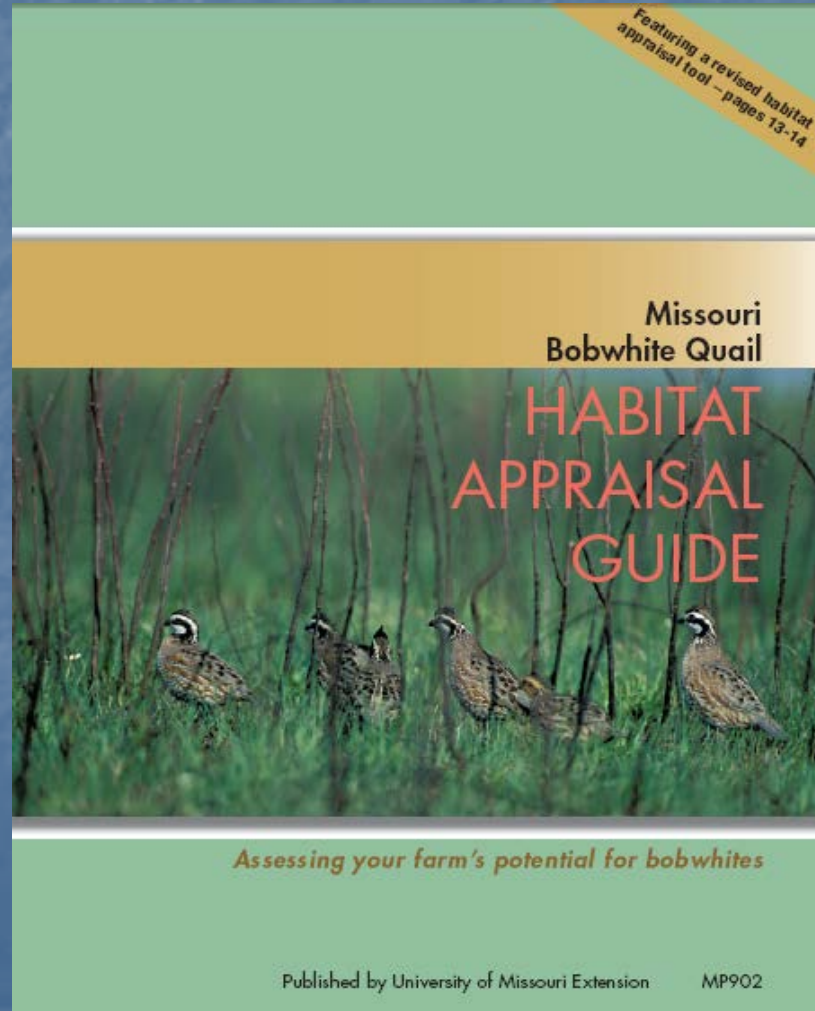
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Missouri Department of Conservation

Conservation Planning

Module 6B - 2013



Why Use It?

- Quail planning tool – private/public
- Can be used by inexperienced personnel and landowners
- Good reference or checklist
- Breaks down each quail habitat component
- Identifies the most limiting factor

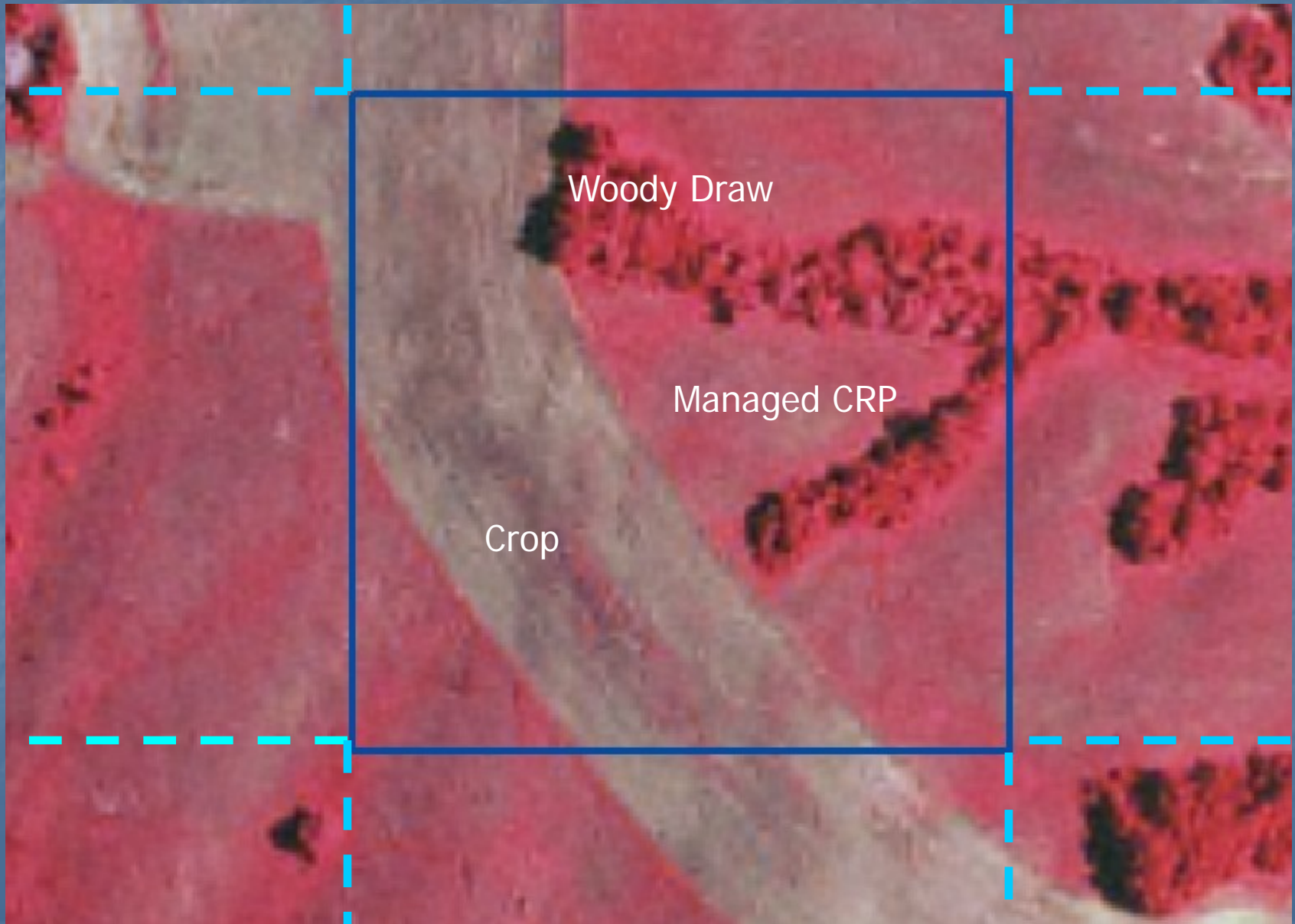
BWQ Habitat Tool

- Divided into 5 parts -
 - Nesting
 - Brood Habitat
 - CHQ's
 - Food
 - Arrangement
- Conduct appraisal during growing season

BWQ Habitat Tool

- Identify the home range
 - 15 acre min, 80 acre max
 - the smaller the home range, the more intensive the management
- Your goal is to provide all habitat components for 1 covey per home range

Quail home ranges do not have to conform to field boundaries



Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Tool

Name _____ Date _____ Planner _____

Land management goal: 1 covey per 20 acres (optimum home range is 15 acres) Size of evaluation area: _____ acres

Habitat components, listed below, are the elements needed for survival and propagation of the species. For BWQ, these components include (A) Nesting Cover, (B) Brood Habitat, (C) Covey Headquarters, (D) Food, and (E) Arrangement of Habitats.

Scoring Instructions - Descriptions for quail habitat components are listed below. Under each description, find the rating or explanation that best matches the habitat being appraised on your farm. Then locate the corresponding score (the bold number in front of the explanation) and write it on the chart to the right. Two columns are provided for existing and planned conditions. These scores will be used to determine limiting factors at the end of this form. The charts allow for up to four habitats to be appraised on this form.

(Additional forms can be printed online at extension.missouri.edu/explore/miscpubs/mp0902.htm.)

A. Nesting Cover - Herbaceous cover consisting of bunch grasses with forbs and low-growing plants with last year's grass growth available before or during nesting season (May 1 to Sept. 15).

Nesting cover quantity - Percentage of home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10** 30% or more
- 8** 20% to 30%
- 6** 10% to 20%
- 4** 1% to 10% or open stands at ground level from previous

	Existing	Planned	
1.			Nesting cover quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Average nesting

Part A. - Nesting Cover

Nesting Cover – bunch grasses with forbs and low-growing shrubby cover with last year's growth available for nest building

Little blue, side oats, broomsedge, timothy







Part A. - Nesting Cover

1. Nesting cover quantity

Measure the % of home range dominated by preferred cover

>30% is ideal





>30% is nesting cover

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Tool

Name _____ Date _____ Planner _____

Land management goal: 1 covey per ____ acres (optimum home range is 15 acres) Size of evaluation area: _____ acres

Habitat components, listed below, are the elements needed for survival and propagation of the species. For BWQ, these components include (A) Nesting Cover, (B) Brood Habitat, (C) Covey Headquarters, (D) Food, and (E) Arrangement of Habitats.

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(Additional forms can be printed online at <http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/miscpubs/mp0902.htm>.)

A. Nesting Cover - Native warm-season grasses or wildlife-friendly cool-season bunch grasses with last year's growth available before or during nesting season (May 1 to Sept. 15).

Nesting cover quantity - Percentage of home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10** 30% or more
- 8** 20% to 30%
- 6** 10% to 20%
- 4** 1% to 10% or open stands at ground level fescue/brome
- 0** None present (if 0, skip to Brood Habitat)

Average nesting cover height - The condition of vegetation (previous year's growth) during the nesting season, with residue available for use May 1.

- 10** Greater than 8 inches
- 8** 6 to 8 inches
- 4** 4 to 6 inches

	Existing	Planned	
1.	10		Nesting cover quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Average nesting cover height
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Legumes/ forbs in



Part A. – Nesting Cover

2. Nesting cover height
– the condition of
the vegetation
(previous year's
growth) available
during May – Sept



Nesting Cover

o four habitats to be appraised on this form.

Additional forms can be printed online at extension.missouri.edu/explore/miscpubs/mp0902.htm.)

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Nesting cover quantity - Percentage of home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10 30% or more
- 8 20% to 30%
- 6 10% to 20%
- 4 1% to 10% or open stands at ground level fescue/brome
- 0 None present (if 0, skip to Brood Habitat)

Average nesting cover height - The condition of nesting cover vegetation (previous year's growth) during the nesting season, with residue available for use May 1.

- 10 Greater than 8 inches
- 8 6 to 8 inches
- 4 4 to 6 inches
- 2 Less than 4 inches

Distance to edge - Distance from center of nesting cover to an edge.

- 10 50 to 75 feet
- 6 25 to 50 feet or 75 to 150 feet
- 2 less than 25 feet or more than 150 feet

	Existing	Planned	
1.			Nesting cover quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	10		Average nesting cover height
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Distance to edge
2.			
3.			
4.			



Part A. – Nesting Cover

3. Distance to edge –
from center of nesting
cover to an edge –
fencerow, fireline, disk
strips, crop, woody
draw

Quail prefer to nest
within 50-75 feet of
edge





nesting cover

Nesting Cover

to four habitats to be appraised on this form.

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Average nesting cover height - The condition of nesting cover vegetation (previous year's growth) during the nesting season, with residue available for use May 1.

- 10 Greater than 8 inches
- 8 6 to 8 inches
- 4 4 to 6 inches
- 2 Less than 4 inches

Distance to edge - Distance from center of nesting cover to an edge.

- 10 50 to 75 feet
- 6 25 to 50 feet or 75 to 150 feet
- 2 less than 25 feet or more than 150 feet

	Existing	Planned	
1.			Nesting cover quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Average nesting cover height
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	10		Distance to edge
2.			
3.			
4.			



Review - Nesting Cover

- Amount in home range
- Height of previous year's growth
- Distance to edge



Part B. – Brood Habitat

Brood Habitat – Plant community made up of annual forbs, legumes, weeds, no-till crops available May 15-Sept. 15.

Brood habitat will contain insects which are the most important food item for nesting hens and chicks.

Part B. – Brood Habitat

1. Brood habitat quantity – percent of home range dominated by forbs/legumes/annuals, or minimum/no-till crops.



>40% ideal



Crop field is no-till, and burned CRP totals 40%-50% of the home range

Brood Habitat

2 Less than 10% or more than 40%

B. Brood Habitat - Herbaceous plants and bare ground that consists of new growth of forbs/weeds, annuals, minimum or no-till crops in each home range, needed from May 15 to Sept. 15.

Brood habitat quantity - Percent of the home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10 40% or more forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 8 30% to 40% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 6 20% to 30% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 4 10% to 20% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 2 1% to 10% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 0 No preferred cover, or conventional tilled crops (if 0, skip to Covey Headquarters)

Percent bare ground - Openness throughout brood area (below 6")

- 10 25% to 50%
- 5 5% to 25%, or 50% to 75%
- 0 Less than 5% or more than 75%: 0 (if 0 skip to Covey Headquarters)

Screening Cover - Canopy cover above foraging broods (6 inches)

- 10 50% or more
- 8 30% to 50%
- 6 10% to 30%
- 2 1% to 10%
- 0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

1.	10		Brood habitat quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Percent bare ground
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Screening cover
2.			
3.			
4.			

C. Covey Headquarters - Woody shrubs, low growing stemmy trees, down tree structures, feathered

Part B. – Brood Habitat

2. Bare ground – open conditions (below 6 inches) at the soil surface are critical for optimal brood rearing habitat



Bare Ground





Brood Habitat

B. Brood Habitat - Herbaceous plants and bare ground that consists of new growth of forbs/weeds, annuals, minimum or no-till crops in each home range, needed from May 15 to Sept. 15.

Brood habitat quantity - Percent of the home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10 40% or more forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 8 30% to 40% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 6 20% to 30% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 4 10% to 20% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 2 1% to 10% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 0 No preferred cover, or conventional tilled crops (if 0, skip to Covey Headquarters)

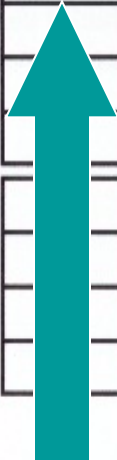
Percent bare ground - Openness throughout brood area (below 6")

- 10 25% to 50%
- 5 5% to 25%, or 50% to 75%
- 0 Less than 5% or more than 75%: 0 (if 0 skip to Covey Headquarters)

Screening Cover - Canopy cover above foraging broods (6 inches)

- 10 50% or more
- 8 30% to 50%
- 6 10% to 30%
- 2 1% to 10%
- 0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

1.			Brood habitat quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	5		Percent bare ground
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Screening cover
2.			
3.			
4.			



Part B. – Brood Habitat

3. Screening cover – the canopy of herbaceous plants above foraging broods (greater than 6 inches).





Brood Habitat

B. Brood Habitat - Herbaceous plants and bare ground that consists of new growth of forbs/weeds, annuals, minimum or no-till crops in each home range, needed from May 15 to Sept. 15.

Brood habitat quantity - Percent of the home range dominated by preferred cover.

- 10 40% or more forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 8 30% to 40% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 6 20% to 30% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 4 10% to 20% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 2 1% to 10% forbs/legumes, annuals or minimum/no-till crops
- 0 No preferred cover, or conventional tilled crops (if 0, skip to Covey Headquarters)

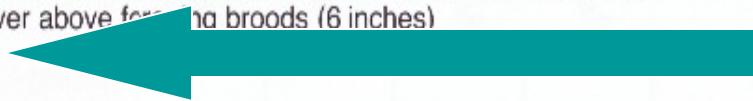
Percent bare ground - Openness throughout brood area (below 6")

- 10 25% to 50%
- 5 5% to 25%, or 50% to 75%
- 0 Less than 5% or more than 75%: 0 (if 0 skip to Covey Headquarters)

Screening Cover - Canopy cover above forbs and broods (6 inches)

- 10 50% or more
- 8 30% to 50%
- 6 10% to 30%
- 2 1% to 10%
- 0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

1.			Brood habitat quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Percent bare ground
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	10		Screening cover
2.			
3.			
4.			



Review – Brood Habitat

- Amount in home range
- Bare ground
- Overhead canopy cover



Part C. – Covey Headquarters

- Consists of woody shrubs, low-growing trees, down tree structures, feathered edge. Ground cover within headquarters must be sparse.
- 50 ft. X 30 ft. at a minimum – 1,500 sq. ft.

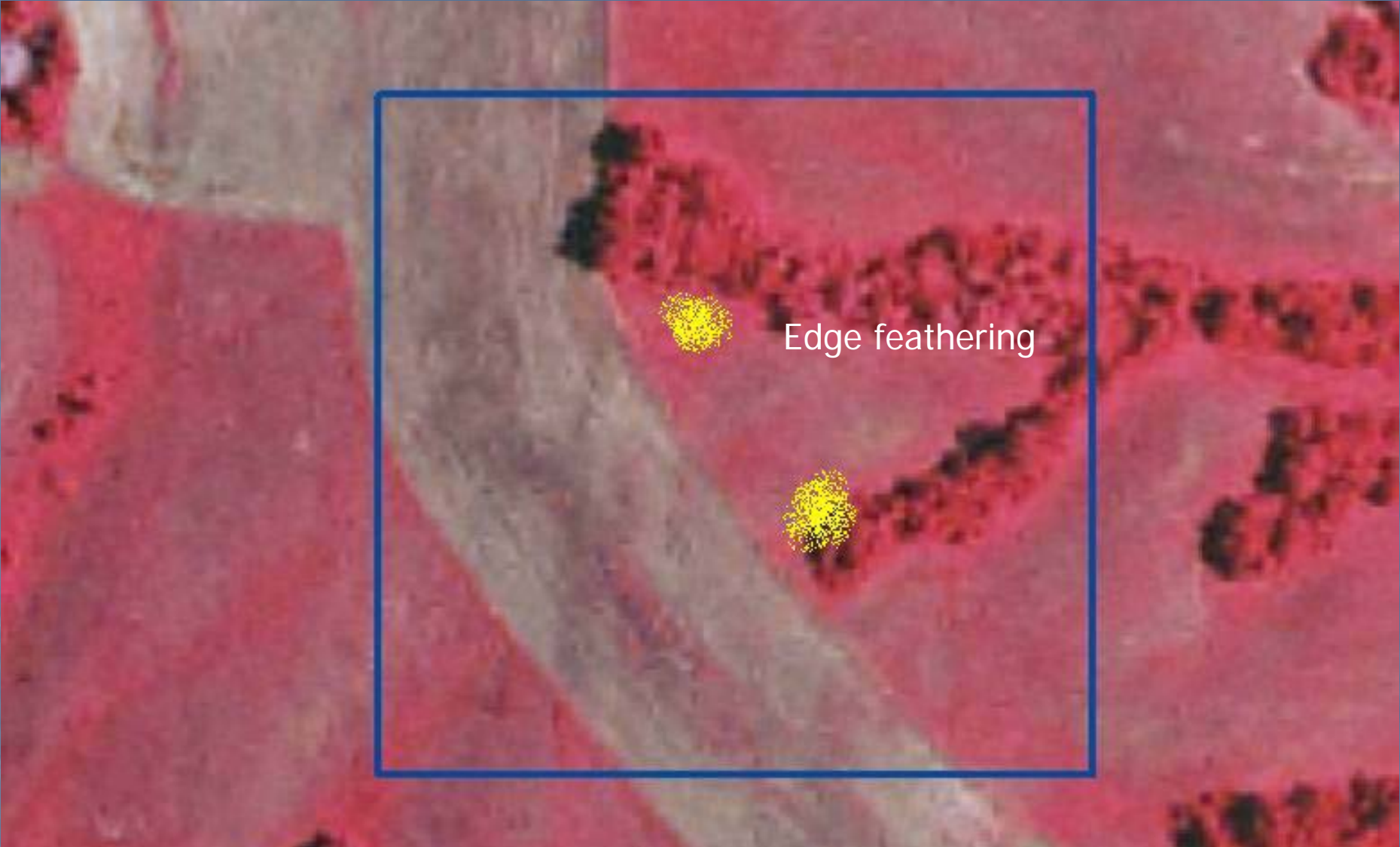
Part C. – Covey Headquarters

1. Covey headquarters quantity –

% of covey headquarters in home range.

10-25% is ideal





Covey Headquarters in this example are less than 1% of the home range

Covey Headquarters

0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

C. Covey Headquarters - Woody shrubs, low-growing stemmy trees, down tree structures, feathered edge. Headquarters at a minimum should be 30 feet wide by 50 feet long, or 1,500 square feet.

Covey headquarters quantity - Amount of covey headquarters in each home range.

- 10 10% to 25% of home range
- 8 5% to 10% of home range
- 6 1% to 5% of home range
- 2 Less than 1% or more than 25% of home range
- 0 No covey headquarters within the home range: 0 (If 0, then skip to next page)

Covey headquarters composition - Quality of the plant community.

- 10 Woody shrubs and low-growing stemmy trees, upright growth habitat and little ground litter
- 6 Down tree structures, tangled vines, blackberry thickets, feathered edge, little ground litter
- 2 Larger trees without extensive low growing stems, or non-upright shrubs
- 0 Headquarters with closed/rank ground vegetation or overhead tree canopy

Covey headquarters density - Canopy closure or canopy cover provided by plant structure.

- 10 60% to 80% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 8 40% to 60% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 6 20% to 40% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 2 Less than 20% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 0 Canopy less than 3 feet high or more than 12 feet high or canopy more than 80%

1.	2		Covey headquarters quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Covey headquarters composition
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Covey headquarters density
2.			
3.			
4.			

Part C. – Covey Headquarters

2. Covey headquarters composition – measure the quality of the covey headquarters. (shrubs, edge, etc...)

Must be open at ground level



Covey Headquarters

0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

C. Covey Headquarters - Woody shrubs, low-growing stemmy trees, down tree structures, feathered edge. Headquarters at a minimum should be 30 feet wide by 50 feet long, or 1,500 square feet.

Covey headquarters quantity - Amount of covey headquarters in each home range.

- 10 10% to 25% of home range
- 8 5% to 10% of home range
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- 0 Canopy less than 3 feet high or more than 12 feet high or canopy more than 80%

1.			Covey head quan
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	0		Covey head comp
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Covey head dens
2.			
3.			
4.			



Part C. – Covey Headquarters

3. Headquarter density
- canopy coverage
(3-12 feet) provided
by the covey
headquarters.



Covey Headquarters

0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

C. Covey Headquarters - Woody shrubs, low-growing stemmy trees, down tree structures, feathered edge. Headquarters at a minimum should be 30 feet wide by 50 feet long, or 1,500 square feet.

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- 2 Less than 20% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 0 Canopy less than 3 feet high or more than 12 feet high or canopy more than 80%

1.			Covey headquarters quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			

1.			Covey headquarters composition
2.			
3.			
4.			

1.	10		Covey headquarters density
2.			
3.			
4.			



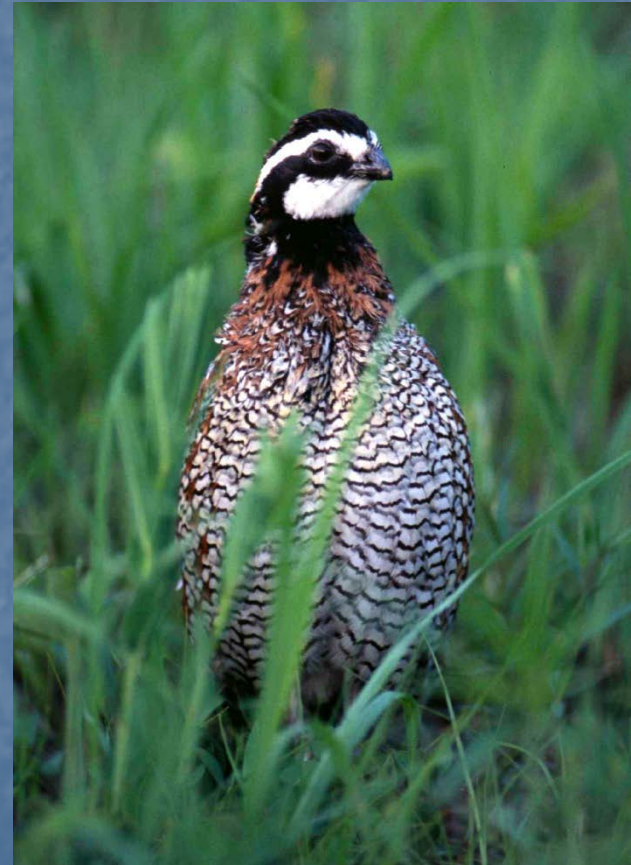
Review – CHQ's

- Amount in home range
- Type
- Density



Part D. - Food

- Diet consists of insects, seeds, fruits, legumes, grasses, shrubs, trees, crops.
- More than 300 food plants found in diet of MO quail.



Part D. – Food

1. Food quantity - % of the home range that provides food for quail

“How many food plants would you touch in 100 paces”

>50% is ideal





No Till
Crop

Woody draw

CRP

Food

D. Food - Seeds of grain crops and/or naturally occurring herbaceous or woody plants.

Food Quantity- Percentage of the home range that provides food plants for quail.

10 50% or more

8 30% to 50%

6 10% to 30%

4 1% to 10%

0 No food plants in home range: 0 (if 0, skip to Interspersion)

Food Diversity- How many food groups are present (forbs/legumes/grasses/grains/woody)?

10 4 or more food groups

7 3 groups

5 2 groups

2 1 group

Food Accessibility- Percent of bare ground in food areas. (Food availability depends on bare ground.)

10 50% or more

7 30% to 50%

5 10% to 30%

2 Less than 10% bare ground

	Existing	Planned	Applied	
1.	10			Food quantity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.				Food diversity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.				Food accessibility
2.				
3.				
4.				

Part D. – Food

2. Food diversity – Number of food groups present in home range (forbs/legumes/grasses/grains/woody)



Food

D. Food - Seeds of grain crops and/or naturally occurring herbaceous or woody plants.

Food Quantity- Percentage of the home range that provides food plants for quail.

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7 30% to 50%

5 10% to 30%

2 Less than 10% bare ground

	Existing	Planned	Applied	
1.				Food quantity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.	10			Food diversity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.				Food accessibility
2.				
3.				
4.				

Part D. – Food

3. Food Accessibility – Bobwhites secure most of their food on the ground. Thus food must be available for use on bare ground (evaluating ground litter).



Food

D. Food - Seeds of grain crops and/or naturally occurring herbaceous or woody plants.

Food Quantity- Percentage of the home range that provides food plants for quail.

10 50% or more

8 30% to 50%

6 10% to 30%

4 1% to 10%

0 No food plants in home range: 0 (if 0, skip to Interspersion)

Food Diversity- How many food groups are present (forbs/legumes/grasses/grains/woody)?

10 4 or more food groups

7 3 groups

5 2 groups

2 1 group

Food Accessibility- Percent of bare ground in food areas. (Food availability depends on bare ground.)

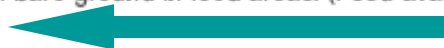
10 50% or more

7 30% to 50%

5 10% to 30%

2 Less than 10% bare ground

	Existing	Planned	Applied	
1.				Food quantity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.				Food diversity
2.				
3.				
4.				
1.	10			Food accessibility
2.				
3.				
4.				



Review - Food

- Amount in home range
- Diversity
- Bare ground

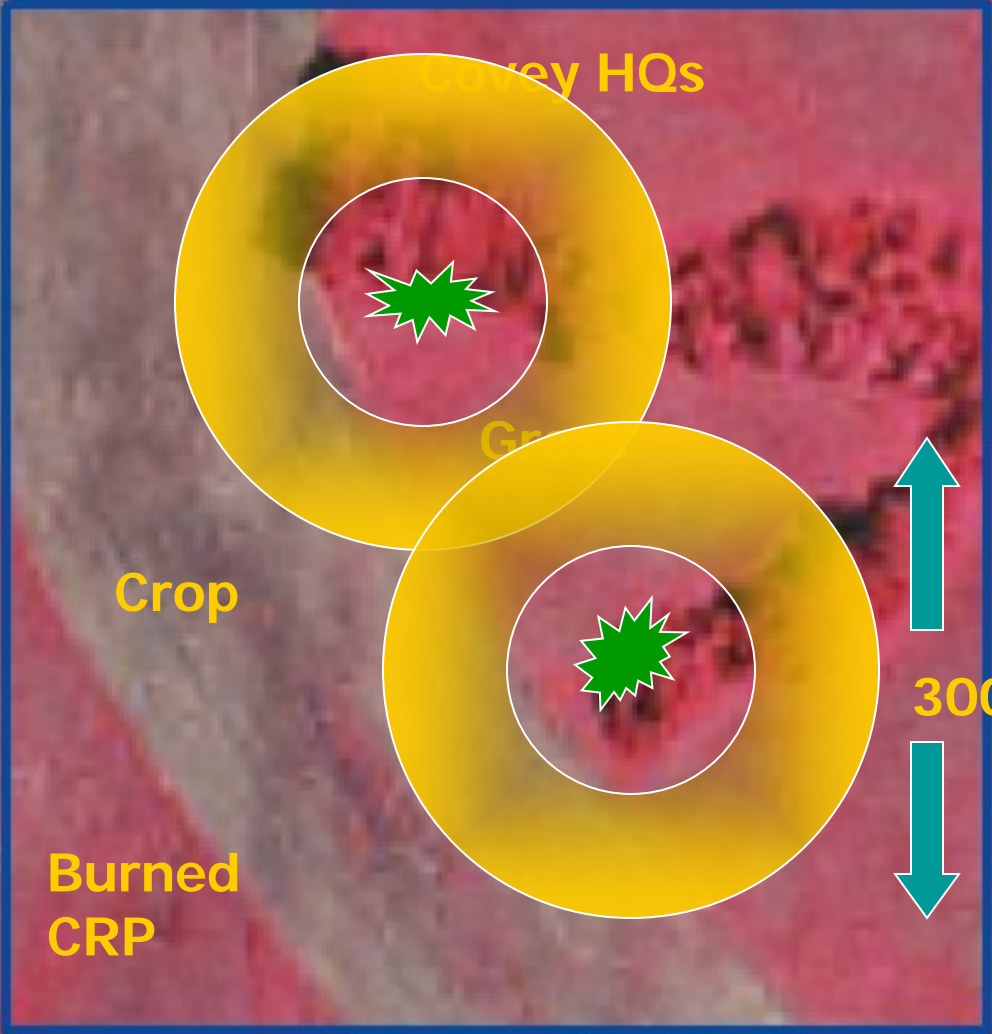


Part E. – Arrangements of Habitats

- Quail require a mix of habitats located close together.
- Use aerial photo to determine interspersion between habitat types.

Part E. – Arrangements of Habitats

1. Do nesting cover, brood cover, covey HQs and food occur within 150 feet of each other in one or more places?



Covey HQs

Crop

Crop

Burned
CRP

300 ft.

Arrangement

E. Arrangement of Habitats: the spatial arrangement and mix of herbaceous and shrubby cover is an important consideration in determining the quality of the habitat components, including nesting and brood-rearing cover, protective escape cover and food.

Rating criteria for arrangement of habitats

Do nesting cover, brood cover, covey headquarters and food occur within 150 feet of each other?

- 10...yes
- 5...within 660 feet
- 0...no



Distance to covey headquarters. What proportion of the area is within 150 feet of a covey headquarters?

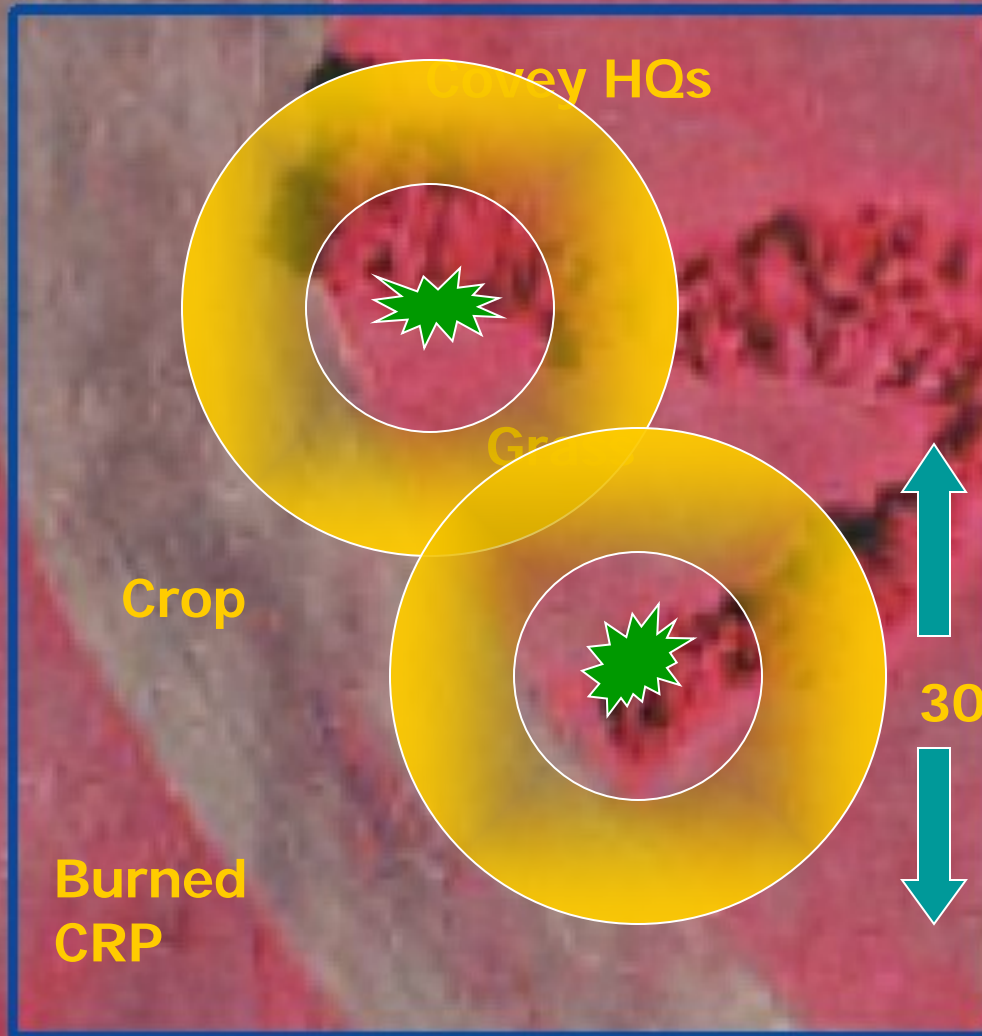
- 10..... >80%
- 8.....>60 to 79%
- 6.....>40 to 59%
- 4.....>20 to 39%
- 0..... <20%

1.	10		Arrangement of habitats
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.			Distance to headquarters
2.			
3.			
4.			

Part E. – Arrangements of Habitats

2. Percent of the field within 150' of covey HQ?

About
30%



Arrangement

E. Arrangement of Habitats: the spatial arrangement and mix of herbaceous and shrubby cover is an important consideration in determining the quality of the habitat components, including nesting and brood-rearing cover, protective escape cover and food.

Rating criteria for arrangement of habitats

Do nesting cover, brood cover, covey headquarters and food occur within 150 feet of each other?

10...yes

5...within 660 feet

0...no

Distance to covey headquarters. What proportion of the area is within 150 feet of a covey headquarters?

10..... >80%

8.....>60 to 79%

6.....>40 to 59%

4.....>20 to 39%

0..... <20%

1.			Arrangement of habitats
2.			
3.			
4.			

1.	4		Distance to headquarters
2.			
3.			
4.			



Limiting Factors

	<i>Range 1</i>	<i>Range 2</i>	<i>Range 3</i>	<i>Range 4</i>	
A. Nesting Cover					Existing conditions
B. Brood Habitat					
C. Covey Headquarters					
D. Food					
E. Habitat Arrangement					

- Enter the lowest value under each habitat component (A-E).

In this example, the lowest value for Covey Headquarters is 0....


0 No herbaceous cover above height 6 inches

C. Covey Headquarters - Woody shrubs, low-growing stemmy trees, down tree structures, feathered edge. Headquarters at a minimum should be 30 feet wide by 50 feet long, or 1,500 square feet. 

Covey headquarters quantity - Amount of covey headquarters in each home range.

- 10 10% to 25% of home range
- 8 5% to 10% of home range
- 6 1% to 5% of home range
- 2 Less than 1% or more than 25% of home range
- 0 No covey headquarters within the home range: 0 (If 0, then skip to next page)

Covey headquarters composition - Quality of the plant community.

- 10 Woody shrubs and low-growing stemmy trees, upright growth habitat and little ground litter
- 6 Down tree structures, tangled vines, blackberry thickets, feathered edge, little ground litter
- 2 Larger trees without extensive low growing stems, or non-upright shrubs
- 0 Headquarters with closed/rank ground vegetation or overhead tree canopy 


Covey headquarters density - Canopy closure or canopy cover provided by plant structure.

- 10 60% to 80% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 8 40% to 60% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 6 20% to 40% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 2 Less than 20% canopy at 3 to 12 feet high
- 0 Canopy less than 3 feet high or more than 12 feet high or canopy more than 80%

1.	2		Covey headquarters quantity
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	0		Covey headquarters composition
2.			
3.			
4.			
1.	10		Covey headquarters density
2.			
3.			
4.			

Enter the lowest figure for each category, A-E

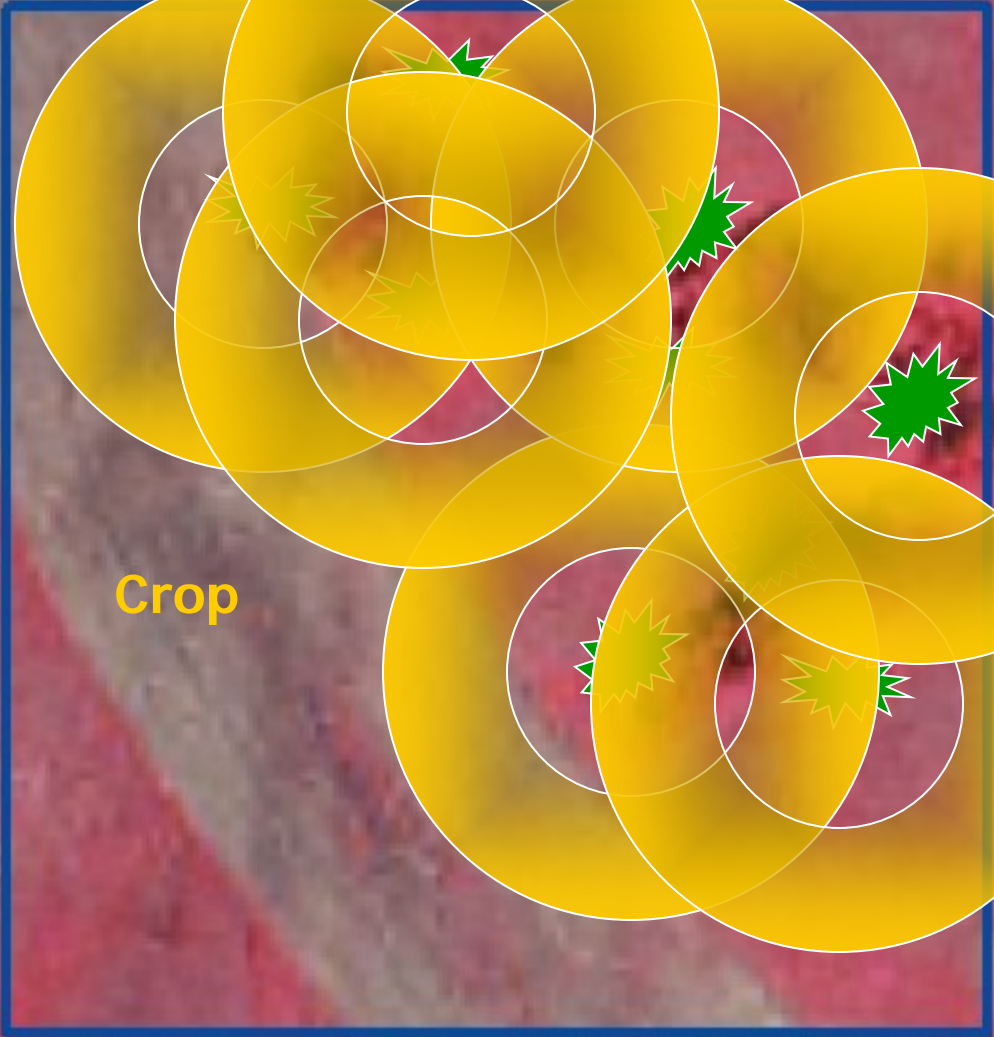
The lowest limiting factor value equals the habitat component that requires the greatest attention. A wildlife biologist can help you interpret habitat scores, and a management plan can be created to correct deficiencies.

	Range 1	Range 2	Range 3	Range 4	
A. Nesting Cover	10				Existing conditions
B. Brood Habitat	5				
C. Covey Headquarters	0				
D. Food	10				
E. Habitat Arrangement	4				

This home range may not hold quail due to unsuitable covey headquarters and poor dispersion, brood habitat could be improved too.

WHAT NOW?

- This home range has good nesting and food sources
- Covey Headquarters and Habitat Arrangement both scored low and should be addressed, brood habitat too.
 - Treat fescue in existing CHQ's and increase number and dispersion, manage CRP to favor brood habitat



Crop

Improve brood habitat to 25-50% bare ground

CHQ increased from <1% to 1-5%

Usable space increased to >60-79%

The lowest limiting factor value equals the habitat component that requires the greatest attention. A wildlife biologist can help you interpret habitat scores, and a management plan can be created to correct deficiencies.

	Range 1	Range 2	Range 3	Range 4	
A. Nesting Cover	10				Existing conditions
B. Brood Habitat	10				
C. Covey Headquarters	6				
D. Food	10				
E. Habitat Arrangement	8				

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Guide – Questions?

