

## **N1a– Kansas Cover Mix Guidance for CP12**

### **Wildlife Food Plots**

Food plots shall be installed using Conservation Practice (CP) 645, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Food plots shall be established to benefit target wildlife species and to meet landowner objectives in wildlife management. Food plots are designed to provide a food source for wildlife during severe winter or in areas where food may be limited such as large Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields that are isolated from cropland. Most grain crops and forages are adequate for food plots (i.e., corn, grain sorghum, wheat, alfalfa, brassicas, peas, beans). A combination of grain sorghum and forage sorghum provides food and cover through selective lodging. Use standard agronomic practices to produce a moderate yield. A lower yielding food plot with some weed presence is acceptable if wildlife habitat objectives are met for the targeted species. Planting should be timed to achieve crop maturity before frost. In addition to annual crops, plantings may include biennial and perennial forbs which produce green browse such as alfalfa and clover. Management may include the development of paired plot design with half planted each year and the other half allowed to grow naturally–occurring forbs. Planting shall provide adequate size and production to meet the food needs of the target species. See Table 2, Construction Specifications CP 550, Range Planting, for adapted species and seeding rate recommendations for native and introduced forbs.

### **Food Plot Planting and Management**

Site preparation, planting schedule, planting method, and seeding rate shall be in accordance with accepted agronomic practices for selected food crops and soil types as listed on the field sheets. Seedbed preparation should be carried out to minimize negative environmental impacts. Planting should be done in a manner to control erosion. Seed must be of a quality that provides the desired food plot yield. Legumes should be correctly inoculated. Fertilizers should be applied according to a nutrient management plan for moderate yield. Pesticides should be used sparingly since it may not be necessary to maximize yield. Non-irrigated food plots are recommended but irrigation may be applied during the development of the food crop according to the conservation plan.

### **Chemicals (For Food Plot Establishment and Growth/Noxious Weed Control)**

All pesticides used in performing this practice shall be registered by federal, state, and local governments and shall be applied strictly in accordance with authorized and registered uses, directions on the label, and other federal or state policies and requirements. Annual plant communities and associated insect life should be recognized as valuable for wildlife. Wildlife shall be considered before applying pesticides.

### **Location (For Food Plots)**

Food plots shall be located where soil conditions are suitable to grow desired wildlife food plants and where erosion is controlled to a tolerable level "T." The primary considerations for locating food plots are the targeted species habitat needs and landowner objectives. Location options include, but are not limited to, viewable wildlife areas, upland game hunting areas, and stabilization of target wildlife populations. Predation and human impacts should be considered when planning food plot locations. Placed around a portion of or the entire perimeter of a field, food plots may serve as a firebreak. Be sure to follow applicable program requirements.

### **Timing (For Food Plots)**

Food plots shall be timed to provide food supplies at critical times for target species. For some upland birds, food plots may provide both insects for brood habitat and high energy carbohydrates for survival during harsh winter conditions.

### **Size (Of Food Plots)**

The maximum size of food plots shall be 10 percent of the field size or 5 acres/field (whichever is less). The food plot may consist of 1 or more food plots not to exceed the total acreage limit of 10 percent or 5 acres/field. Refer to Farm Service Agency, 2-CRP, National CRP CP 12, Wildlife Food Plot, for additional guidance.