

Disking for Early Successional Habitat

Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
 Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)
 University of Missouri Extension – The School of Natural Resources

For:	County:	
Field(s):	Farm #:	
Date:	Tract #:	Acres:
Designed By:	Contact Information:	

BARE GROUND WITH AN OVERHEAD CANOPY OF WEEDS IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF BOBWHITE QUAIL CHICKS AND MANY OTHER GRASSLAND BIRDS

PURPOSE: Dense sod or vegetation is detrimental to wildlife feeding and movement and can be improved with a practice known as strip disking (Figure 1). Strip disking reduces residue, creates bare ground, and promotes desirable broadleaf plants that produce seed and attract insects, at a much lower cost than planting food plots. To be effective, strip disk in grassland habitats next to areas of usable shrubby cover such as covey headquarters, downed tree structures, edge feathering, or native shrub thickets.



Figure 1.

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Disk at least 4-6 inches deep to **expose 30 to 70% bare soil.**
- Disk in strips 30 to 75 feet wide. Disk each field in thirds on the contour (Figure 2). Each disked strip should be separated by an area of undisturbed vegetation twice as wide as the disked strip. In subsequent years, disk the adjacent strip. This develops adjacent strips of vegetation of three different ages.
- Disked strips should be as long as possible and should follow the contour of the field to prevent erosion.
- Avoid disking in areas where concentrated flow is a concern.

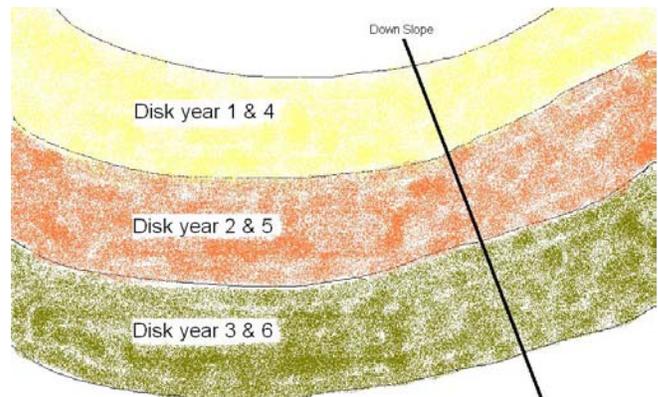


Figure 2. Field showing disking in rotation performed on the contour. Follow this pattern down slope.

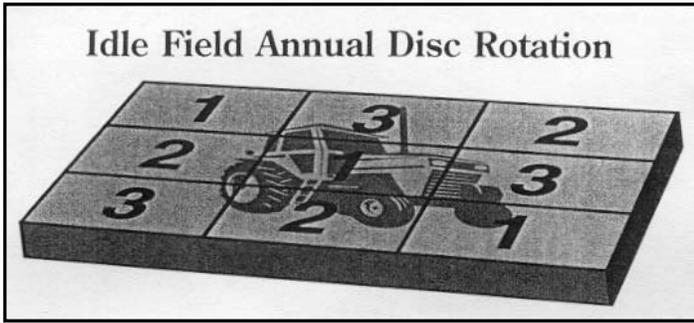


Figure 3.

- On flat ground, such as ridgetops and creek bottoms the disked areas can be in 30 to 75 foot wide blocks (Figure 3). Disk the numbered block in the year shown (1, 2, or 3), and repeat the process again in year four.

- Disk between July 16 and March 31. Late summer/fall disking tends to favor broadleaves; spring disking tends to favor weedy grasses. Disk before February to get the best response from desirable quail food plants such as ragweed.
- Native wildflowers and wildlife friendly legumes can be overseeded into the disked strips to improve diversity. **DO NOT plant** seresia lepedeza, birdsfoot trefoil, sweetclovers, or crownvetch. Refer to JS-BIOL-20, Native Forb and Non-Native Legume Interseeding Job Sheet for specific details on interseeding.

MAINTENANCE:

- Maintain the disking rotation.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.

PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover sources for quail and other grassland wildlife.

Consult with NRCS, MDC, or University Extension for additional recommendations.

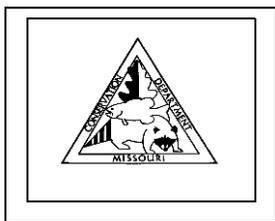
Disked grass stand resulting in >50% bare ground



Six months after disking



Comment:



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