

# White-tailed Deer Habitat Evaluation

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The aspiring deer manager must be able to visually assess the suitability of a given piece of land as deer habitat. The things that must be evaluated include:

**Water** - Deer need to have access to permanent water, preferably within a half mile.

**Cover** - Ideal deer cover consists of large tracts of moderate or thick brush (where deer cannot be seen from about 50 yards). Open areas can be interspersed within the brushy cover, as long as deer can always be within about 50 yards of areas of cover. Fawning cover consists of tall grass and or low dense brush where newborn fawns can be hidden from predators.

**Food** - Habitat that provides a stable and reliable food supply will have a variety of both desirable perennial forbs and browse, available to deer. The presence of mast producing trees (oak, mesquite, pecan) and annual forbs is desirable, but is not evaluated because these food sources are seasonal and unreliable. Low Value browse, forbs and grasses are not evaluated.

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	Circle appropriate rating	
<b>Water:</b> What percentage of area is within ½ mile of permanent water?	75 - 100%	Excellent
	50 - 75%	Good
	25 - 50%	Fair
	0 - 25%	Poor
<b>General Cover:</b> What percentage of area that you can see is covered by or within about 50 yards of moderate or thick brush?	75 - 100%	Excellent
	50 - 75%	Good
	25 - 50%	Fair
	0 - 25%	Poor
<b>Fawning Cover:</b> What percentage of area supports tall grass or dense low brush?	50 - 100%	Excellent
	20 - 50%	Good
	10 - 20%	Fair
	0 - 10%	Poor
<b>Food:</b> Evaluate the abundance, variety and availability of <b>desirable perennial forbs and browse</b> (See attached list)		
At least 10 species from list are present and available and well distributed across general area (must include forbs and browse). Food is available approximately every square yard.		Excellent
At least 5 species from list are present and available and well distributed across general area (must include forbs and browse). Food is available at least every 4 square yards (2 yd x 2 yd).		Good
At least 5 species from list are present, but distribution and availability may be limited. Food is available at least every 16 square yards (4 yd x 4 yd)		Fair
Plants from list are scarce, unavailable or poorly distributed across general area. Food is generally not available every 16 square yards (4 yd x 4 yd).		Poor

List the common deer food plants:

Perennial Forbs

Browse

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Items to consider when evaluating and troubleshooting deer habitat:

1. Is there a moderate or distinct browse line on desirable species?
2. Are desirable shrubs hedged?
3. Are desirable perennial forbs present primarily in protected areas?
4. Are desirable perennial forbs heavily grazed?
5. Are young plants present of desirable perennial forbs and browse?
6. Is area grazed properly to provide adequate fawning cover?
7. Would additional brush management degrade cover?
8. Can brush management be accomplished in a manner to maintain adequate cover?
9. Does area produce adequate fuel for a prescribed burn?
10. Is additional water development needed and feasible?

Based on the evaluation, what appears to be the weak link(s) in deer habitat?

Water                      General Cover                      Fawning Cover                      Food

Notes and Habitat Management Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_

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Based on this evaluation, the overall habitat rating is:

Excellent                      Good                      Fair                      Poor

**Checklist of Plants and Their Value as Deer Food**

**Rolling Plains, Cross Timbers and northern Edwards Plateau Vegetational Areas**

**Note: Habitat will be evaluated using the "desirable" plants on the top half of the page.**

**Additional desirable forage plants not listed below, may be counted during inventory.**

<b>Desirable Browse</b>	<b>Desirable Perennial Forbs</b>	<b>Desirable Perennial Grasses</b>
Black willow Bumelia * Carolina buckthorn Carolina snailseed Buttonbush Coralberry Cottonwood Dewberry* Elbowbush Elm Ephedra Fourwing saltbush Flameleaf sumac * Grapevine* Greenbriar Hackberry * Indigobush amorpha Littleleaf sumac * Mistletoe Old man's beard Poison ivy Post oak Roemer acacia * Skunkbush sumac * Texas mulberry Virginia creeper Western soapberry * White honeysuckle Wild plum*	Bindweed Bladderpod sida Bloodberry Bluestar Bundleflower Bush sunflower Butterflypea Dalea Dayflower Engelmann daisy Evolvulus Fleabane Four o'clocks Frogfruit Gaura Gayfeather Globemallow Goldenrod Ground cherry Hairy tubetongue Heath aster Indian mallow Knotweed leaf flower Larkspur Lazy daisy Low menodora Maximilian sunflower Mexican sagewort Milkpea	Milkwort Morning glory Orange flameflower Perennial paintbrush Penstemon Perennial sparges Prairie acacia Prairie clover Primroses Rain Lilly Rock daisy Ruellia Scurfpea Sensitivebriar Skeletonplant Slender Lespedeza Snakeherb Snoutbean Spiderwort Spreading sida Sweet gaillardia Trailing ratany Trailing wildbean Wild mercury Wild onion Windflower Winecup Wood sorrell Yellow neptunia
<b>Low Value Browse</b>	<b>Low Value Perennial Forbs</b>	<b>Annual Forbs**</b>
Algerita Catclaw acacia * Catclaw mimosa * Fragrant mimosa Lotebush * Mesquite* Mexican buckeye * Pricklyash Pricklypear* Tasajillo * Whitebrush Willow baccharis Wolfberry Yucca*	Basketflower Bladderpod Bluebonnet Bluecurls Broomweed Burclover Carolina geranium Common ragweed Coreopsis Doveweed Filaree Giant ragweed Huisache daisy Indian blanket Indian paintbrush Kochia Lambsquarter Peavine Pellitory Pepperweed Pigweed Russian thistle Tallow weed Tansy mustard Texas star daisy Thistle Wild carrot Wild vetch	Cedar sedge Spikerush Texas bluegrass Western wheatgrass Wildrye
<b>Annual Grasses**</b>	* These woody plants provide mast - flowers, fruit, beans, nuts important to deer when available, but an unreliable and short-term food supply	
<b>Cropland/Food Plot</b>	** Annual forbs and grasses important to deer when available, but an unreliable and short-term food supply	
Wheat / Oats Winterpea Vetch Grain sorghum Cowpeas Lablab	<b>Habitat will be evaluated using the "desirable" plants on the top half of the page.</b>	
Japanese brome Little barley Ozarkgrass Rescuegrass	<b>Low Value Grasses</b> Arizona cottontop Big bluestem Buffalograss Curly mesquite Fall witchgrass Green sprangletop Hairy grama Hall's panicum Hairy tridens Hooded windmillgrass Indiagrass Little bluestem Plains bristlegrass Plains lovegrass Red grama Reverchon bristlegrass Sand/Tall dropseed Sideoats grama Silver bluestem Slim tridens Southwestern bristlegrass Switchgrass Texas cupgrass Texas grama Texas wintergrass Threeawn Vine mesquite White tridens	

