South Carolina 4-H

August 2014

Issue 1

Wildlife Food Plot Project

Inside this issue:

Now in its second year, SC 4-H welcomes project sponsors QDMA: Quality Deer Management Association and their youth component, the Rack Pack, back as a sponsor in addition to new sponsor Wannamaker Wildlife. QDMA will be providing the project awards and Wannamaker Wildlife will provide the seed. Together, we plan to continue to grow this project so that youth around our state can get hands on experience in outdoor life.

The purpose of this project is to educate the youth of SC on the proper techniques of food plot establishment to the benefit of game animals and other wildlife species. The program also teaches many of the life skills that are the core of 4-H, such as responsibility, leadership, record keeping, creativity, and becoming stewards of the land.

In addition to preparing, planting, maintaining, and observing a food plot, participants will be required to upkeep and return a project record book. There are 3 record books based on age divisions: Cloverbuds (ages 5-8), Juniors (ages 9-13), and Seniors (ages 14-19). Each book is broken down into sections based on project timing and topic: preparing, planting, maintaining, and observing. Youth will also be required to keep up with financial incomes and expenditures, write a short project story, record precipitation records, sketch a map of the plot, collect plot samples such as feathers and/or pictures of tracks, and document the project in photos.

While this project provides the opportunity for youth to hunt over the food plot, it is certainly not a requirement. We realize that the goal of some youth is to harvest an animal, while the goal of others is simply to enjoy the wildlife in their natural surroundings.

Youth should expect at least one site visit from their Extension Agent or someone on their behalf. Visits will be scheduled by your Agent. The score sheet from this visit and the record book will both be used in judging the plot. The top Junior and Senior from each county will move on to the regional level. The top Junior and Senior in each region will be awarded and then will move on to the state level. The top Junior and Senior at the state level will be declared winners. Awards will be sponsored by QDMA.

SC 4-H, QDMA, the Rack Pack, and Wannamaker Wildlife wish everyone the best of luck with their food plot. Should you have any questions throughout the season please do not hesitate to contact your local Extension Agent or visit the Wildlife Food Plot Project website at: www.clemson.edu/extension/county/newberry/programs/4h/foodplotpage.html.

Dates to remember:

- October 1
  Deadline to plant provided wildlife food plot seed mix
- November-December
  Site visit from Extension Agent
- January 9
  Deadline to return completed project record books to Extension Office

CLEMSON COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

QDMA

QDMA RACK PACK

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Planting Your Project Food Plot

What to Plant

The seed mix for this year's project is provided by Wannamaker Wildlife out of St. Matthews, SC. This bag of seed, in the 12 pound quantity given, is the only seed that will be allowed in a project food plot. No additional seed may be added. This 4-H Special Mix consists of oats, wheat, peas, radish, and rape.

Where to Plant

Consider these tips when choosing your plot location:

-plant away from roadways or property boundaries
-plant such that you can approach without disturbing wildlife
-plant away from human, pet, and livestock traffic
-plant close to cover for wildlife security
-plant a long and narrow plot to increase the edge
-do consider unused corners and edges of crop fields, forest openings, adjacent to fence rows, utility rights of way and access roads, logging roads, edges of wide woods roads, logging decks, fire lanes, abandoned fields

To determine your soil pH on the proposed plot site take a soil sample and send it off through your local Clemson Extension Office. The $6 fee for this sample is included in the project fee. (For information on taking a soil sample and reading the results visit Clemson University's Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC) at: www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/other/soils/hgic1652.html. It is also recommended that your food plot get at least 6 hours of sunlight per day.

When to Plant

The project deadline for having your seed in the ground is Wednesday, October 1.

How to Plant

The 4-H Special Mix is best planted by spreading the seed on a well-prepared seedbed. First, fertilize well based on soil sample recommendations. Then, disc the land and plant the peas, wheat, and oats mixture. Cover well by re-discing. Finally, spin spread the radishes and rape on top and drag over to cover these seed.

Tools to Plant With


Disc


Spin Spreader


Drag

The Project Record Books

The SC 4-H Wildlife Food Plot Project does require that participants complete a record book. The goal is for youth to gain knowledge in addition to getting hands on experiences. If you lose your record book or need help with it do not hesitate to ask your Extension Agent for assistance. Please note that it is much easier to maintain these record books throughout the season rather than trying to remember all the information at the end of the season and cram the information into the book then. The more details the better! And remember, be neat. Your record books will be judged as a part of the project competition.

Newberry County 4-H
Alana West, 4-H Agent
1860 Wilson Road
Post Office Box 160
Newberry, South Carolina 29108
P: 803-276-1091 x111
F: 803-276-1095
awillin@clemson.edu
www.clemson.edu/extension/county/newberry/programs/4h/index.html

"To Make the Best Better"

Build Your Own Exclosure Cage

Often, food-plot farmers complain about crop failure because nothing seemed to grow in the field they planted, especially in small plots. The plants germinated fine but never grew more than an inch or two. While it appeared that the crop failed, often the culprit is deer browsing the crop so heavily that the plants never stood a chance. This is where a browse exclosure, also called a utilization cage, is important. A browse exclosure is a simple, wire exclosure that prevents deer from feeding in a small portion of a plot. The crop can grow inside this cage without browse pressure, providing a visual gauge of pressure outside the exclosure. For more info visit www.qdma.com/articles/how-to-build-a-browse-exclosure.

What you need:

- 2x4" panel, 4' tall welded wire fencing
- Gloves
- Wire shears
- Rebar or wood stakes
- Wire ties
- Hammer

What to do:

- Wearing gloves and using wire shears, cut fencing into 10-foot long sections. Each section will form 1 browse exclosure. When cutting through horizontal wires, make the cut close to the next vertical wire, leaving tag ends of horizontal wires projecting.
- Roll the section until the ends connect to form a cylinder. Bend the tag-end wires of one end around the vertical end wire of the opposite end, forming loops that attach the ends of the rolled cage together.
- Drive sturdy stakes of rebar or wood into the ground on opposite sides of the cage and secure the cage to the stakes with wire ties. Or, weave the stakes through at least three panels near the bottom of the cage by bending the panel wires slightly, then drive the stake into the ground. The cage should be secure enough to withstand wind as well as animals pushing it.