

Stewardship Notes

Indiana Division of Forestry



Controlling Wildlife Damage in Tree Plantations and Forests

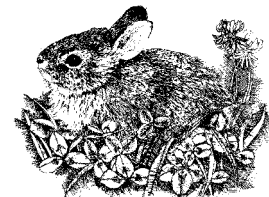
Wildlife is a natural part of forests and tree plantations. Many people plant trees and shrubs for the purpose of attracting wildlife. Unfortunately, wildlife may damage or destroy tree plantings or forest areas by feeding, rubbing antlers, chewing bark, or, in the case of beaver, flooding areas and felling trees. In some cases, it is desirable to discourage wildlife usage of an area until trees are established and can fend off damage that feeding and other wildlife activities produce.



Tree plantings are subject to different wildlife hazards in their first years of growth. The most common problems include damage to seedlings by feeding deer, rabbits and rodents. Completely eliminating damage is not usually economically feasible, but there are several ways to reduce damage:

Know the species of animals common on your property. Neighbors, hunters, and resource professionals, such as DNR district wildlife biologists, can help identify common species. Plant species of trees that are not the most desirable food sources for wildlife on your property. District foresters and district wildlife biologists can help select appropriate species.

Eliminate heavy grass or weed cover where rabbits and rodents can hide. Many small animals are hesitant to enter an area where there is no escape cover from predators. Regular mowing will help keep rodent damage, and to a lesser extent, rabbit damage, under control. Erecting poles to serve as perches for hawks and owls may also help control some damage by rabbits and rodents. Protect seedlings by fencing or the use of "tree tubes." Purdue University has a publication titled FNR-136 *Electric Fences for Preventing Browse Damage by White-tailed Deer*. This publication is available through your County Extension office.



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Information on obtaining tree tubes is available from your district forester. Many natural predators have been eliminated in Indiana, leading to unnaturally large populations of some prey species, such as deer. Hunting may be used to keep some wildlife populations at healthy levels, and limit damage to plantings.

The Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife offers several publications on the control of nuisance wildlife. They can be contacted at: (317) 232-4080