

FS 745

Protecting Trees from Animal and Bird Damage

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Protecting Trees

from Animal and Bird Damage

Larry Helwig
Extension forester

Dogs

The lower foliage on evergreens can suffer from dog urine damage. The foliage will turn blackish and die after frequent visits.

The male dog should be discouraged from making the visits or physically kept away. You can try fencing in the evergreen, spraying repellents on the lower foliage, discharging a firecracker or BB gun as the dog approaches, or hanging a set and baited mousetrap where he will trip it.

Rodents

Rodent pests include rabbits, cottontails, mice, and porcupines. Keeping the tree planting free of weeds and trash is the best way to reduce the amount of damage rodents make.

Hunting

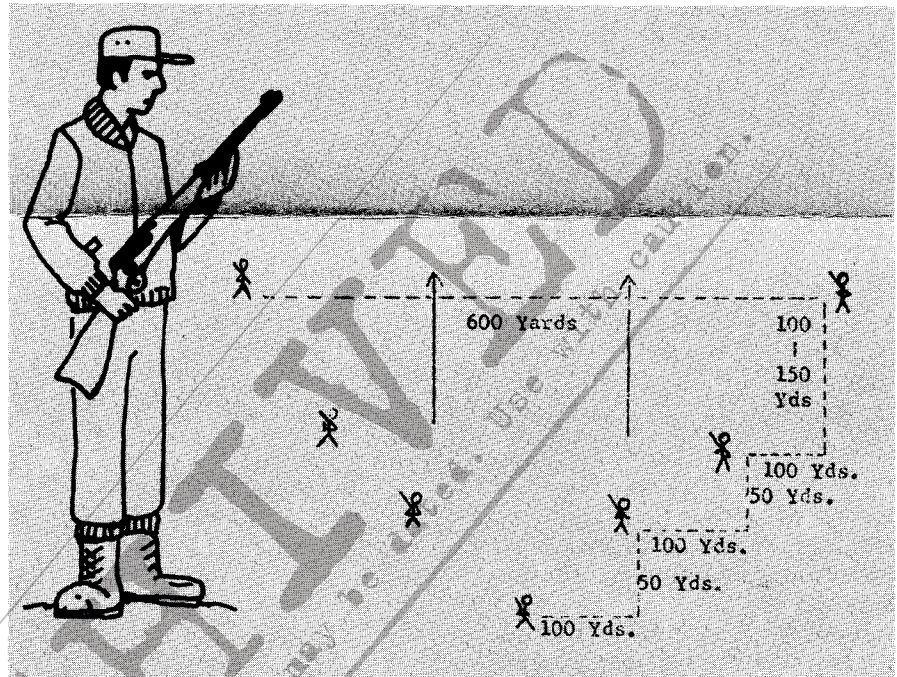
In rural areas, systematic hunts should decrease rabbit, cottontail, and porcupine populations. Be sure to check with your local conservation officer for hunting season dates.

Jackrabbit hunting will require a systematic hunt for at least one mile around the tree planting.

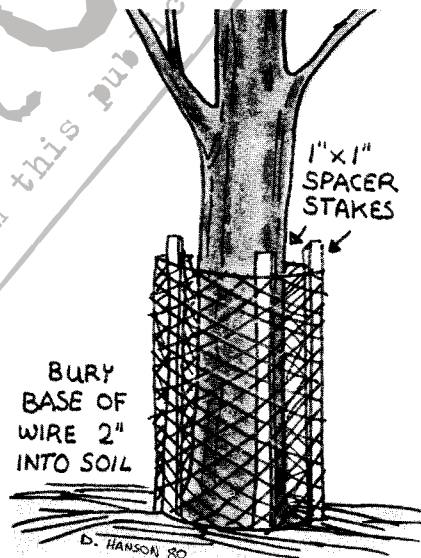
In the evenings, porcupines who've made nuisances of themselves will feed on corn at specially located bait stations. Shooting or trapping at these stations makes the job easier.

Mechanical barriers

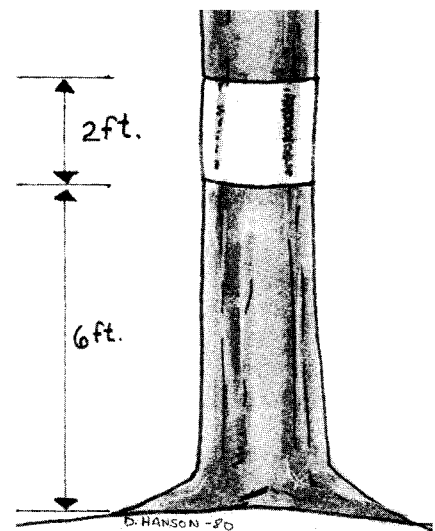
Where only a few trees are involved, wrap them with fencing, burlap, or hardware cloth to keep rabbits and mice away. Be sure to bury the



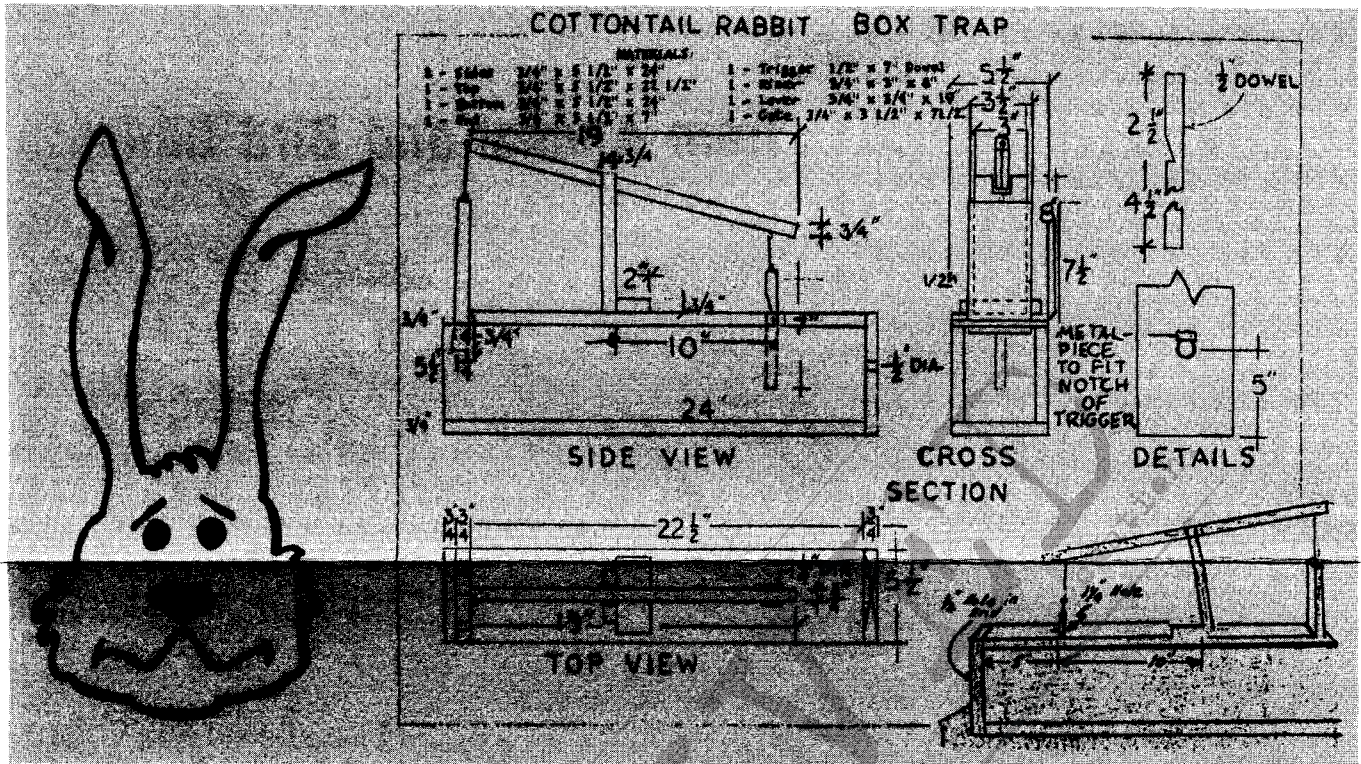
A systematic hunt will reduce rabbit populations for several weeks.



Protect tree trunks from rabbits and mice with wire netting wraps. The spacer stakes keep the netting away from the trunk, preventing the animals from chewing on the bark.



A metal band will keep squirrels out of a lone tree.



barrier about 2 inches deep around the base of the tree, so mice cannot crawl under the barrier.

If you have squirrel problems, a 2-foot wide metal band placed about 6 feet above ground level on the tree trunk will keep squirrels out of the tree—at least from below.

Chemical repellents

You can use chemicals that give an unappetizing taste on plantings where large numbers of young trees are involved. Apply in October, brushing or spraying the chemicals on the young trees. Fruited varieties of trees will especially need some kind of chemical protection. There are a large number of repellents on the market, but availability usually limits their use.

Soil Conservation District Offices should be able to check on supplies for you. If they're not available in local stores, order them through a wholesaler and keep a supply in the SCS district office. Some of the products on the market include TNB-A (not to



Repellents can be sprayed or brushed on trees in the fall. Rabbits will still nibble

at the plants, but they won't make a meal.

be used on conifers), Thiram, Arasan 42-S, and "Rabbit Repellent."

For effective mouse control, place zinc phosphide treated grain in small cans near or in mouse trails. Druggists, farm stores, and grain elevator operators should know where to order rodent repellents.

Winter home reduction

Around small trees or young plantings, removal of vegetation or piled debris will usually minimize the chance of rodent damage. Thick grass will attract mice; weed and brush piles attract cottontails.

A clean planting should not be bothered by cottontails or mice, but neighboring jackrabbits could still reduce the young trees to stubs. When great numbers of nearby jackrabbits are observed, organize a hunt.

Deer and livestock

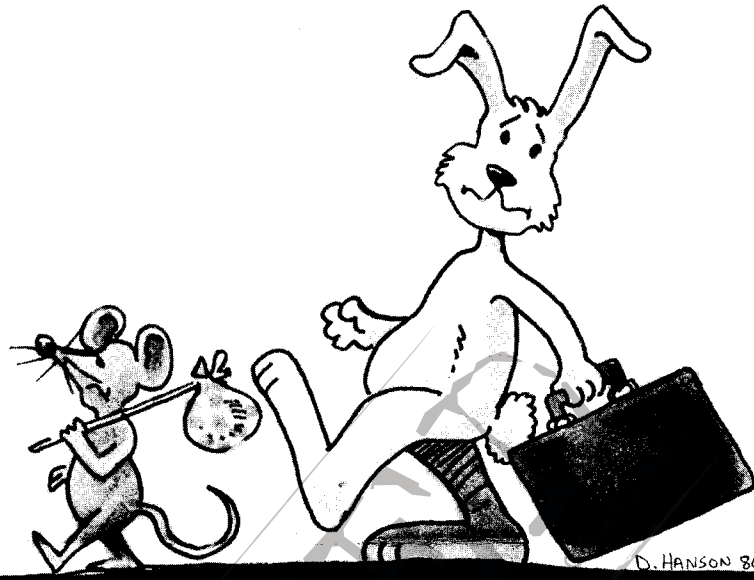
Heavy concentrations of deer can cause considerable damage to larger shelterbelts. They will browse young, succulent growth and damage trees by rubbing their velveted antlers on the trees. Rubbing is most noticeable on evergreen trees, which will have broken branches and stripped bark as a result.

Repellents will minimize browsing damage. You can also let the conservation officer know that hunters are welcome in the area to help control deer numbers.

If the tree planting or grove is valuable to the farmstead, **all classes of livestock should be fenced out.**

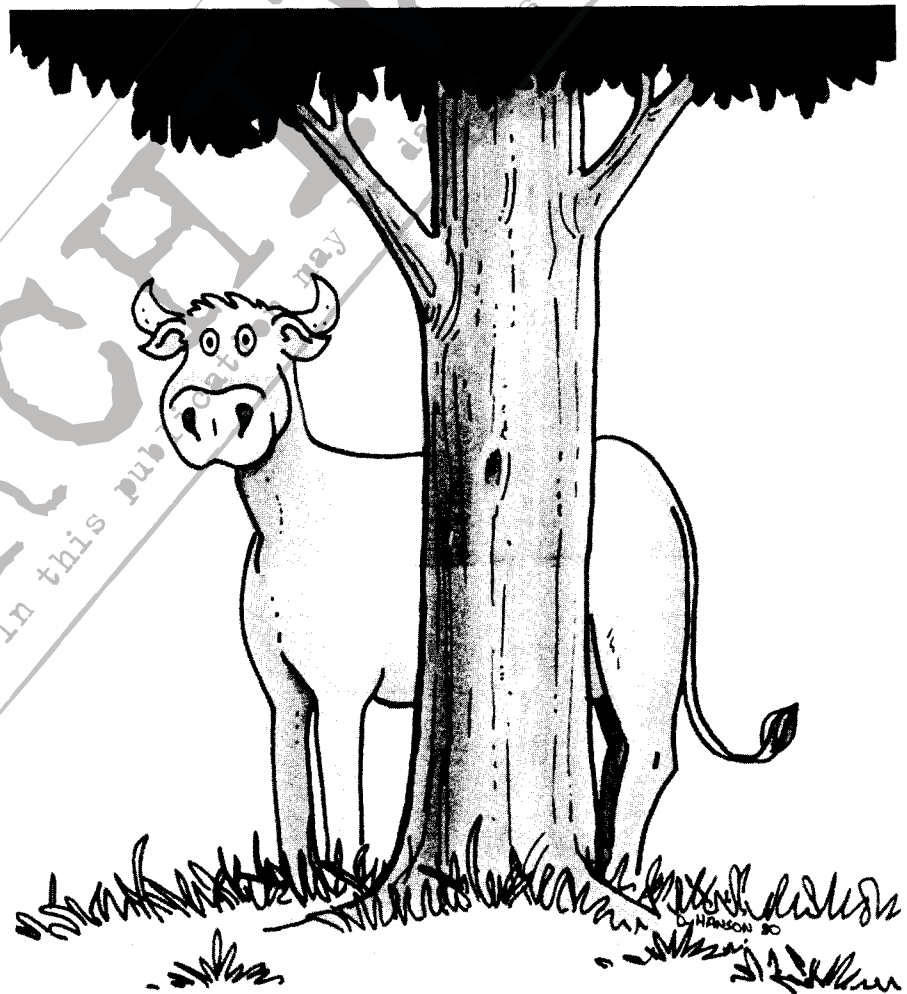
Cattle and sheep eat off bottom branch tips and rub off the lower branches. Pigs dig up and eat the tree roots, and horses will eat the bark off the trees when their diets aren't complete.

But worst of all, the livestock will compact the soil in the root area, shutting off good infiltration of moisture and air.



Rabbits and mice will damage or kill trees and shrubs. Blackening the ground

through cultivation drives them out in search of another winter home.



Keep up a good, stout fence around your tree planting. Livestock compact the soil and damage the lower branches. The summer shade the animals might gain is

more than offset by the wind and snow a damaged shelterbelt will let through in winter.



Don't be alarmed when you see the trunk of your favorite tree drilled with well aligned, 1/4-inch holes. The yellow-bellied sapsucker has paid you a visit. It has not been known to cause much damage to a tree.

Poultry and birds

A chicken's scratching and dusting around trees can be damaging, because young feeder roots may be destroyed.

The yellow-bellied sapsucker pecks out a characteristic and well patterned series of holes in the trunks of trees (usually evergreens). However, it has never been known to kill a tree. Hanging shiny objects in the trees is claimed to keep birds from coming back.



Highly sophisticated equipment is available to help drive off birds and

animals that become pests.

Use of product name does not imply endorsement.

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