

# INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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### WELL-FED BOBWHITE WHISTLES AT WINTER

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Winter cold -- unless unusually severe -- and preying enemies hold few terrors for the well-fed bobwhite or quail. Neither does snow so long as the bird can find food above the snow line. It is only when the food supply is scanty, or covered with snow so that the birds can not get to it, that winter is likely to take heavy toll, say game bird specialists of the Bureau of Biological Survey who have studied the ways in which the birds take care of themselves.

Quail are good foragers and eat a wide variety of foods -- fruits, nuts, berries, grain, and seeds of crop plants and weeds. But they do not range so widely as many of the other upland game birds. Small patches of feed material not too far apart and fairly close to good cover make conditions favorable for bobwhites in winter. A feeding place on every forty acres would be ideal, much better than more ample supplies farther apart.

The well-fed quail lives through cold that may finish half-starved birds. With an adequate food supply the birds are alert and keep out of the way of enemies, awing and on foot. With food available near good cover, the birds do not need to take dangerous chances and can thus escape foxes, racoons, and other furry predators; also the few hawks and owls that are quail-killers when they have the opportunity.

Quails relish nearly all the fruits and berries that grow wild within their range -- honeysuckle, wild grape, sumac, dogwood, greenbrier, poison ivy, black gum, and others. Tall growing weeds and crop plants such as sweet clover,

ragweed, corn, and sorghum, are particularly desirable winter feeds in snowy areas, because their seed usually is above the snow.

Farmers who wish to encourage quail may do much to attract them by planting berry-bearing shrubs along fence rows and in gullies. Sportsmen sometimes arrange to buy a few rows or a few shocks of corn in the field, paying the farmer a fair price to leave it, and either open the shocks or break over the corn stalks at times when other food supplies are covered with snow.

Where persimmons are plentiful they are of double value to the quail. The birds like them, and so do foxes and raccons. When the animals can fill up with persimmons they are less likely to prey on quail.

For fence rows and borders of fields, and also for planting on contour strips to check erosion, the Biological Survey recommends a mixture of farm seeds sowed fairly close and to include any or all of the following: corn, sorghum, kafircorn, German millet, proso, cowpeas, soybeans, buckwheat, and barley. Quail relish all these except barley, and they will eat barley if hungry. This makes barley a good reserve feed that the birds will neglect until they really need it.

In winter the seeds of trees and shrubs form a considerable part of the quail menu; the birds are fond of those of box elder, ash, and black locust. Soybean and cowpea varieties that keep well on the vines are to be preferred to those in which the pods open readily. Lespedezas -- both the Korean and the perennial -- are as desirable for quail as they are for fertility and erosion control.

The best way to feed quail is by encouraging wild growth or planting crop seeds in strips or patches to be left unharvested. But if there is a scarcity of this sort of feed, farmers and sportsmen can help the birds through a bad season by scattering harvested grain where the birds can get it. Heads of sorghum, and fodder corn will be used with less waste than threshed grains. Hang ear corn on fences. It is a mistake to encourage quail to come to the barnyard to pick up scatterings of grain. It is better to take the grain to the natural cover in which the birds are wintering. Bobwhites and poultry do not mix well. Each is likely to contract diseases from the other.