

Scent Station Protocol

Texas Quail Index

Purpose: Scent stations provide an index to species diversity and relative abundance of various carnivores, e.g., raccoons, coyotes. Animals are attracted to a scent tablet and leave their tracks on a flour substrate for checking the next morning. Scent stations are checked for two consecutive mornings.

Materials:

- Flour (50 lbs; suggest five, 10-pound bags)
- Scent tablets (Fatty Acid Scent; provided)
- Hula hoop (or other circular frame about 1 yard in diameter)
- Latex gloves (for handling scent tablets)
- Gas-powered weed trimmer (optional)
- Small whisk broom
- Data sheets
- Track identification handouts

Procedure:

1. Establish scent stations during June. A scent station should be established at each mile marker. Select an area at edge of existing road, and smooth an area large enough to accommodate the hula hoop. Use a the weed trimmer if needed to clean the area of vegetation, and then remove any large rocks, gravel, etc. that will interfere with ability to “read” tracks.
2. Sprinkle the flour over the area included within the hula hoop, trying to achieve a smooth, evenly distributed surface about one-half inch deep. This will take 3 to 5 pounds of flour per station. Use the whisk broom, or a broomweed, to smooth the surface as needed.
3. Place a scent tablet near the center of the circle. Make knuckle imprints with two of your knuckles before leaving as a check to “readability” of station next day.
4. Check stations for 2 consecutive mornings; refresh flour as needed (scent tablet should be fine unless it’s been removed).
5. Record and identify any predator tracks observed (*not rabbits or rodents however*) on Scent Station data sheet. Examples of common tracks can be found on the Internet (see References section - Online). You are not trying to estimate how many animals (e.g., raccoons) visit one particular scent station, just “presence” or “absence” for the various species.
6. Take photographs as appropriate.
7. Check weather forecasts before establishing scent stations; even a trace of rain will render the plots unusable (as will a heavy dew).
8. Complete Scent Station Summary sheet and fax to D. Rollins at 915-658-4364.