

Dummy Nest

A "dummy nest" is a simulated quail nest that wildlife professionals use to evaluate nesting success. Professionals would establish one survey line per mile, for six miles. Then, 6 dummy nests are placed along each survey line, spaced 50-yards apart, for a total of 36 dummy nests. These nests are started in May and are monitored weekly for four consecutive weeks. After the four weeks they are checked to see if any eggs have survived. If only egg shells remain, wildlife professionals use the remaining evidence to identify the nest predator.

In this experiment, you will only be making one dummy nest and will watch it for one week. If possible, the nest should be checked daily to see if any eggs are disturbed. After 7 days, check the nest and note if there are any eggs remaining. And if possible, determine the potential nest predator.

Materials:

- 3 chicken eggs, uncooked per nest
- Latex rubber gloves to be worn while handling eggs
- Flagging tape to mark where your dummy nest is located
- 1 Quarter
- (Optional) A Camera to observe your nest daily and at the end of your experiment period
- (Optional) A game camera to monitor your nest

Description of a dummy nest:

A dummy nest is made up of 3 chicken eggs placed in a spot that mimics, or looks like, a place a wild quail would choose. These sites are usually located in either (a) a bunchgrass, or grouping of grass that offers a good hiding spot or (b) a plant/shrub/cactus that is large enough for a quail to sit under. If you are making more than one dummy nest, choose two completely different locations (ex: a shrub and a bunch of grass). You can compare which site offered a better nesting site.

What to do:

1. Find a location to place your dummy nest(s) and if placing multiple nests, make sure they are far enough away from each other so that they can be monitored independently. Ten feet away should be good.
2. Place flagging tape on the nearest tree or shrub and write down detailed directions on how to locate the nest from the flag.
3. Once you have found a bunchgrass or plant/shrub, use your shoe to wallow out the area to the size of a grapefruit. This creates a nest "bowl". Place the quarter in the bottom of the "bowl" to indicate the nest location in case all of the eggs are missing.
4. Wear latex gloves at all times while handling the eggs to minimize human scent. Carefully place the eggs in the nest and use the grass or shrub to cover it. The nest may still be visible, but mostly camouflaged.
5. Take a picture of the nest location.
6. Check your nest sites at least once a day by observing from a distance to minimize leaving your scent in the area. If any eggs are missing or destroyed, the nest was not in a good location for a quail nest. Take a picture of the destroyed nest and any egg fragments left in the area (fragments may be found

several feet from the nest site). If any eggs are left in place you can leave them and come back over the next few days. Once all eggs are gone collect the quarter and dispose of any egg shell fragments.

7. If your nest survives the 7 day period with no loss of eggs, Congratulations! You are thinking like a quail! Take a picture of your nest.

8. Remember to clean up your dummy nest by throwing away the egg remains and flagging tape, and removing the quarter before you leave.

9. Upload your pictures to our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wfsceextension. If your nest suffered a loss of eggs, think about possible predators who might have taken the eggs. Was it a cat, a snake, a raccoon? Try and find out who took the eggs!