

ACREAGES ON THE INCREASE

According to the 2025 Lincoln City/Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan, "Rural Lancaster County is in transition from an area of predominantly agricultural uses to an area which includes more residential uses." Acreages are generally single-family homes on lots of three to five acres, but can be on lots up to 20 acres. The population living on acreages in the year 2000 was calculated at about 15,700 and is estimated to grow to about 22,800 by the year 2025 and exceed 33,000 by the year 2050.

Rural Lancaster County is Unique Mix of Agriculture and Acreages

Gary C. Bergman
Extension Educator

Lancaster County's rural population is a unique mix of commercial and residential farms engaged in various agricultural enterprises. Lancaster County leads the state in the number of farms with nearly 1,600 farm units (to be counted as a farm by the Census, the owner must report at least \$1,000 in annual farm-related income). Interspersed amongst the commercial farms are approximately 4,000 acreages which are essentially residential in nature.

There are over 440,000 acres of farmland in the county (making the average farm size about 280 acres). The 2002 Census of Agriculture reported total livestock sales of \$22 million and estimated the market value of all agricultural production crops at over \$71 million. Other farms produce specialty crops and animals, such as fruits and vegetables for farmers market and U-Pick trade, Christmas trees and nursery stock, bison, llamas, emus and ostriches. Raising and boarding riding horses and other domestic animals also contribute to the animal industry in the county. The value of these enterprises are not reported.

If you are fortunate enough to live on an acreage for the benefits it provides in terms of lifestyle, remember you have chosen to live within a thriving \$100 million industry in this county. If you happen to be a commercial producer, you are likely farming next to someone's residence. It is precisely this duality that contributes to the uniqueness of Lancaster County.

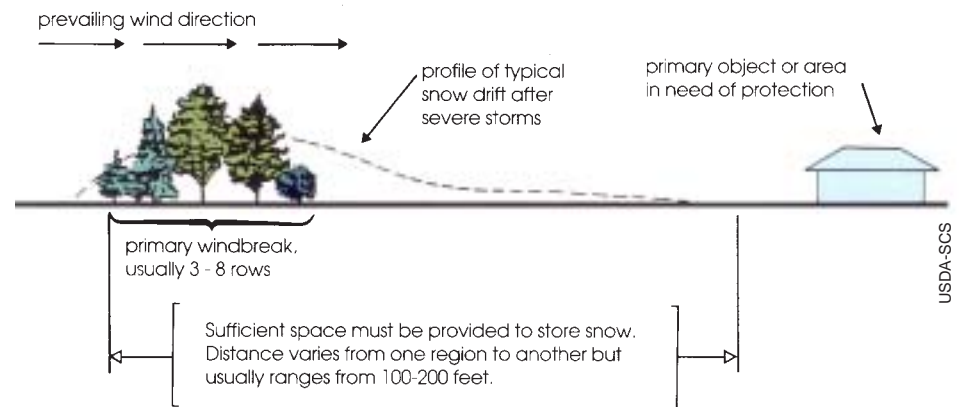
Designing a Windbreak

Don Janssen
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The best designs for windbreaks depend on their intended purpose and the characteristics of the site where they will be located.

Windbreaks can be planted to enhance wildlife, provide snow protection for humans and livestock, and provide wind protection to dwellings in both winter and summer. Windbreaks also prevent soil erosion caused by wind and reduce water runoff from agricultural lands. Typical windbreaks consist of conifers, deciduous trees and shrubs.

Conifers provide dense foliage to reduce wind speed. Tall deciduous trees extend the area of wind protection with their height. Shrubs trap snow, add beauty to the windbreak and provide



A basic windbreak consists of three to eight rows of both conifers and deciduous trees. Conifers or shrubs should be located on the windward side with the tall deciduous species in the center. A row of shrubs on the interior side completes the design.

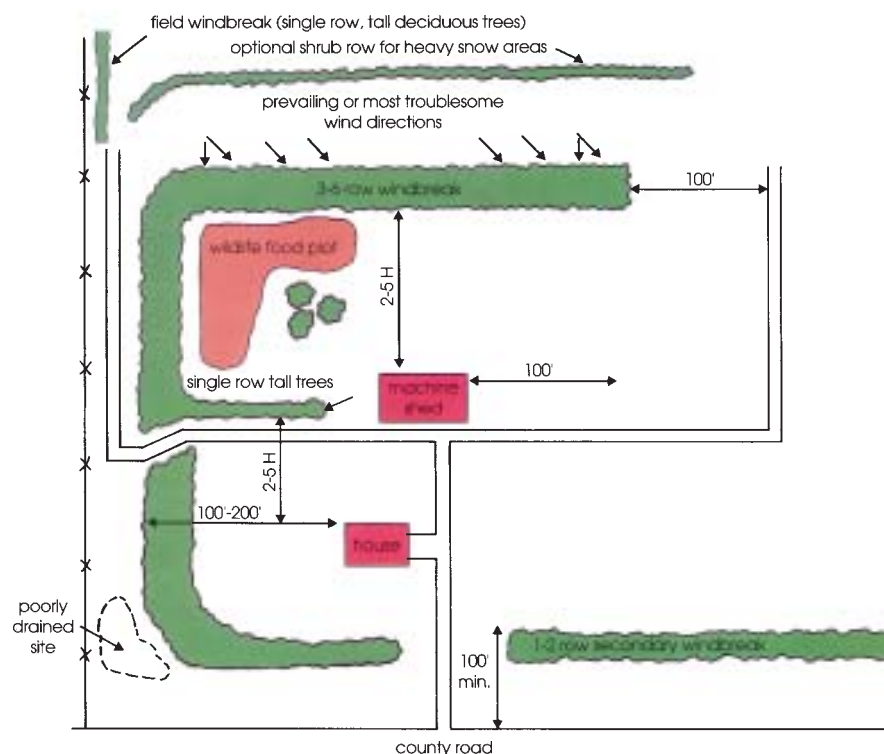
wildlife habitat.

The area protected by a windbreak is determined by the windbreak's average height. Generally, windbreaks

protect an area 10 to 15 times the average height of the trees. Windward tree rows should be located approximately 150 to 250 feet upwind of the protected area in order to allow for snow deposition.

Windbreaks are most effective when planted perpendicular to prevailing winds. Windbreaks for winter protection should be located on the north and west side of the farmstead. Summer wind protection is provided by planting on the south and east sides of the farmstead. The number of tree rows and the plant species used will be determined by the intended purposes of the individual windbreak and the amount of space available. Typical windbreaks include two or more rows of conifers and one or more rows each of deciduous trees and shrubs. Windbreaks with two legs or one planted on two sides of the protected area will provide better protection than a planting on one side only.

Assistance with windbreak planning and design is available from Nebraska Forest Service District Foresters, Natural Resource Conservation Service offices, Natural Resource District offices and local Cooperative Extension offices. For more information on planting a windbreak, consult NU Cooperative Extension NebGuide (G-1304) "Windbreak Design," or (EC 1763) "How Windbreaks Work."



The windbreak should be oriented perpendicular to the prevailing wind directions. Because of wind turbulence around the end of a windbreak, the windbreak should extend 100 to 200 feet beyond the area needing protection.

Surrounded by Pest Habitat, Acreages Can Be Plagued by Pest Problems

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Extension Educator

The list of pests plaguing acreage owners is long. Millipedes, spiders, crickets, ladybeetles, flies and mice invading homes. Ticks and chiggers biting people so they can't enjoy the outdoors. Rabbits, grasshoppers, deer, and voles eating newly planted vegetation. And, snakes basking in the sun, just doing what snakes do.

Why are Pest Problems Greater for Acreage Owners?

The quick answer is there's more "habitat" in rural settings compared with city living. Habitat is defined as the physical location and conditions where a

community of organisms live. A single habitat can support many species.

Let's look at this more closely. If you drive through a city neighborhood, you see rows of houses on relatively small patches of land (i.e., lots), each house surrounded by a moat of grass, typically bluegrass or fescue, nicely mowed to conform with city codes. Lawns are separated by driveways, sidewalks and streets. Urban areas are made up of isolated patches of habitat. Ecologists call this patchiness, habitat fragmentation, which can support relatively small populations of animals.

In contrast, in rural areas, you see a house on a much larger patch of land (3-20 acres), next to even larger patches of land (fields). This habitat is not nearly as fragmented as an urban

setting. The greater amounts of vegetation and land creates more habitat for more pest animals, whether they be small arthropods (insects, ticks and spiders) or vertebrates (mice, deer, rabbits).

When a new home is built on an acreage, it is placed in the middle of an area where these animals are thriving. Normal movement of animals will include movement toward the house, and, if there are small entry points, some will probably get into the house. Over time, if a sizable lawn is established, the problem will abate somewhat, but there will still be more habitat for animals than in the city — simply because of the expanse of fields surrounding the acreage.

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