



PHEASANT CARE

Habitat quality and quantity, and particularly the availability of grassland, are the keys to sustaining a pheasant population. Captive reared pheasants have a low survival rate after release and rarely contribute to the wild population. However, many individuals and groups are interested in raising pheasants for purposes other than increasing population. Pheasant rearing takes time, money and effort so steps should be taken to provide effective care.

Make certain that waterers and feeders are filled (feeders two-thirds full). Water is extremely critical to young pheasants that have been confined in crates while being transported any distance. Use quality, fresh game bird feed; turkey starter with 26% protein content is recommended. Do not feed day-old pheasants a straight diet of whole kernel or cracked corn. Cracked corn may be used two to three days before release. Do not use last year's feed. Gradually switch from crumbles to pellets when birds are approximately eight weeks old.

Keep feed dry. If possible, move the feeders to new locations periodically. Clean up spilled feed. Medium size grit is also recommended.

Watch for signs of sick birds — listlessness, bloody droppings, sneezing, gaping, etc. Disease may be transmitted to the pen by humans, mammals or other birds. Pheasants are subject to a variety of diseases, but can be treated successfully if the disease is detected early. Always remove sick or dead birds from the pen as soon as they are discovered. Consult a veterinarian immediately for diagnosis and treatment. Avoid handling wet birds if possible.

FOR OUTSIDE PENS

Your pen should be located on a well-drained site. Check the pen, replacing old or rusted wire to prevent escapes. Woven wire (galvanized after weaving) is recommended for longer life. Ground wire should be buried at least six inches to discourage digging predators. A "hot wire" around the pen is also good insurance against predators. See suggested pen construction plans on the back of this publication.

Erect several weather shelters. These need not be elaborate — just something to provide shelter from hot sun and driving rains.

Where practical, remove dead trees from the vicinity of the pen to discourage winged predators. Large spikes driven into the tops of the pen's perimeter support posts will also discourage hawks and owls.

If you are getting day-old chicks, make certain your brooding equipment is functioning properly. Equipment should be in operation 24 hours before the birds arrive.

Maintaining good ground cover is essential to raising quality pheasants. Preparation for spring should begin in the fall. Remove any existing woody vegetation from the pen. Recommended practices include discing and seeding, if necessary, to assure quality vegetation the following year. Tall growing, stiff-stemmed plants should be encouraged along with sod-forming mixtures of grasses and legumes. Rows of sunflowers or tall sorghum provide good cover, as do many common weeds. There is no substitute for good cover when birds are being held for fall release.



Don't overcrowd your pen. A minimum of 22 square feet should be allowed for each pheasant. Avoid mixing birds of different age groups.

Just before your pheasants are moved to outside pens, mow a 4-foot to 5-foot wide strip lengthwise through the middle of your pen and another strip crosswise. Also mow strips along the edges of the pen, inside and outside. Mowed strips serve as drying areas. Feeders and waterers should be spaced evenly in these mowed strips. One 4-foot, broiler sized feeder or 100 linear inches of feeding space should be provided for every 100 pheasants. Feeders and waterers should be located in each corner of the pen, at least for the first week after birds are placed in outside pens.

Strips of burlap approximately 10 inches by 20 inches or similar material hung randomly throughout the pen will help reduce injuries.

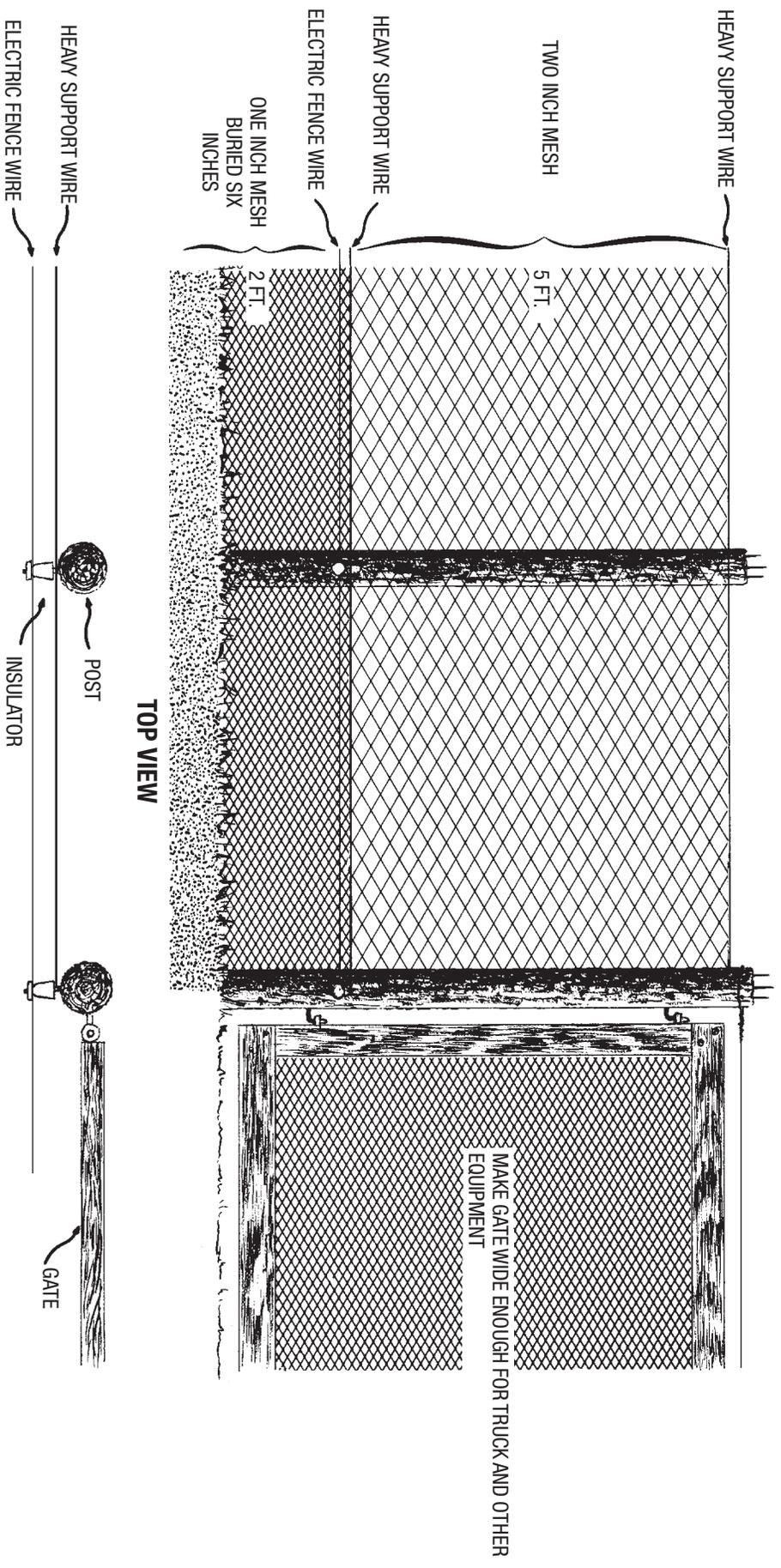
Cannibalism, or pecking, is a common problem in pheasant rearing and is usually the result of inadequate space. Providing adequate space (at least 22 square feet per bird) is the most important single remedy. Providing quality ground cover is also a good preventive measure. Another practice used by pheasant raisers is debeaking. Debeaking removes a portion of the bird's mandible to prevent it from pecking other birds. Only the upper mandible should be trimmed, and not more than 3/16 of an inch. This portion will grow back in three to four weeks. Severe debeaking may result in deformed beaks and in feeding problems when the bird is released. Debeaking may be required more than once, depending upon the length of time the pheasants are held.

A "catching pen" at one end of the pheasant pen facilitates the roundup and loading of birds while minimizing accidents. A layer of gravel in the catching pen helps eliminate dust and/or mud and further minimizes accidents.

AFTER THE BIRDS ARE RELEASED:

When all birds have been released, clean, sterilize and store the feeders and waterers for next season. Make necessary repairs on the pheasant pen and brooding equipment. Initiate appropriate control measures to eliminate rodent pests.

PEN CONSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS



The heavy support wire which is located where the two-inch and one-inch mesh join is necessary to keep the fence from buckling and shorting out the electric fence wire.