

# Field Note

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By Jeff Clarke





Tall fences protect several labor-intensive studies near the north center pivot and the Orchard House. The fences keep large mammals out, but last winter we discovered that small animals can get in and wreak havoc. We installed a 1/4 inch gauge wire fence to battle the tiny vermin. The rodent fence extends two feet below and above ground level and spans half a mile.





One month ago I removed a dozen ponderosa pine exclosures from an area that receives regular ungulate traffic. I added terminal bud protectors to see if they would prevent browse. This week, all the protectors lie on the ground. Antler rubbing stripped one tree but all seedlings escaped browse damage. I will leave the trees unprotected to see how they fare through the winter.





The open landscape allows tumbleweeds to roll for miles and dump seed. A southerly breeze piled the weeds four feet high along the Walton's fence. There they will sit until a northerly breeze rolls them back across the south center pivot and adjacent areas. I will burn the piles before they make their next voyage.





During my daily work, when I notice piles of bear scat, I gather them in plastic sacks. Each pile contains hundreds, if not thousands, of fruit seeds. Next spring we will spread the collected seed on burned soil in the Boondocks.





Shed white-tailed deer antlers appear less often than they used to. I found this one in a matted cheatgrass field.





In 2011, a group of University students helped us erect a series of buck-and-rail exclosures around browsed clusters of chokecherry bushes. I checked on them today and found that the wind blew over two of the five exclosures. Heavy browse reduced the bushes in damaged exclosures. I will fix them in the coming weeks.





Cold autumn temperatures brought a thin layer of ice to most of the Clubhouse pond. Waterfowl must dabble in the river for now.





Tractors seeded all of the planned acreage.





Goldenrod still clings to summer seeds.





When we remove barbed wire fence lines, we pile the posts in lean-to fashion. We thought this might provide some structure for small mammals in the open fields. I checked some of last years' post piles to look for evidence of animal use, and found several rodent nests, trails and caches.





This “head honcho” leads a herd of 20+ mule deer in Baldy Draw.