

## **OPTIMAL NESTING HABITAT STAGE "Three"**

Nesting habitat needs to be undisturbed for approximately 40 days. The hens generally choose nesting sites in cover that is not too dense so movement is fairly easy. Perennial mixtures of grasses and legumes are best choices for those landowners working to enhance their habitat.

The hen will visit the nest site for 12-15 days and lay a single egg. Then the hen reverses her daily activities when the clutch is ready for incubation. She will now stay on the nest for 23 days and only leave once daily to briefly feed. Pheasants generally hatch from late May through June. The average brood numbers about 11 chicks. Pheasant hens are tenacious egg layers. If their initial nest is destroyed she may re-nest up to three times but each nest contains fewer eggs.

Unfortunately for those pheasants nesting in southern Michigan, the hayfield can be a death trap. This is by far the biggest negative impact on pheasant survival. High-speed mowing and nighttime cutting practices further increase the chances that the hen and her nest are killed. One study in South Dakota reported that less than five percent of hens successfully hatched broods when nesting in hayfields.

So what can you do to help? If possible refrain from mowing until July 1<sup>st</sup>. Don't mow after September 1<sup>st</sup> so as not to destroy the height of grasses necessary for the following spring.