

This column features questions from readers submitted via the website. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*

ANSWER

question

Dear Sam,

How can I stop moose from eating our aspen trees? (See picture at right)

– Ken, Centennial

Dear Ken,

Although it looks terrible to you, the damage is actually minor. The trees will compartmentalize – seal off wounds – and have scars but otherwise will be healthy.

Trees can recover from a lot. The damage that can be fatal is a girdled trunk – the bark and underlying tissue is chewed off all the way around the tree. Girdling stops water and nutrients from flowing up from the roots through the tree to the leaves, and the tree will die. This looks like a fairly young and healthy aspen clump so the trees should recover, especially if we have adequate precipitation this year. I'd be more concerned about grazing damage to smaller trees (suckers below 6 feet tall). A certain number of saplings are needed to take over when the older trees die (as part of their normal life spans). You could fence out large herbivores (moose, elk, etc.), but the damage we see in the photo doesn't necessitate this. If you are feeding wildlife or if there are salt licks, you'll want to stop because you will only attract more wildlife and increase the likelihood of more severe damage to your aspen.

We have other information on aspen you may find interesting on the Barnyards & Backyards website (barnyardsandbackyards.com) under "Trees & Shrubs" including videos if you have a faster Internet connection. One video on wildlife habitat covers this type of damage; others discuss regeneration of older aspen stands, if you happen to have those on your property.

I hope you found this information useful!

— Sam

ask Sam



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