

Doing Something About Litterbugs

NOT ALL of the trash around us is seen on TV and in movies. A lot of it is being dumped on roadsides and private property.

The fact that such practice is unethical, unnecessary and illegal does not keep some people from doing what they can to make the countryside ugly. They toss plastic bags of garbage, drink cans, bottles and papers onto highway right-of-ways.

While the majority of homeowners spend millions to grow trees, shrubs and flowers to make their surroundings beautiful, their neighbors may be doing otherwise.

Folks who don't bother to keep their own places clean aren't likely to be concerned about keeping roadsides neat. Some aren't bothered by weeds and ragged lawns. Maybe they just won't pay the fee for having their trash picked up by garbage trucks that pass their doors regularly.

Campaigns have been carried on to educate such people, laws have been enacted to punish thoughtless

dumpers, and drastic action has been taken in other instances. It still goes on.

One Seminole county rancher told of sitting on his horse while a stranger dumped a pickup truckload of trash in his pasture. Then he rode over and made the man reload everything on his truck and haul it away.

A second rancher told me he didn't see the culprit who dumped on his land but he found letters and other identification. He piled it all on his own truck and dumped it on the front lawn of the original litterbug.

The state Department of Transportation reports that it spends more than \$1 million a year for litter pickup along highways, money that could well be used to plug potholes.

One-fourth of all roadside litter is aluminum cans and non-returnable glass bottles. A law is being sought to require deposits on soft drink and beer containers, as is done in other states.

A new broad-front campaign is being carried on, too, to discourage litterers. Cooperating groups include the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Municipal League, Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Association, League of Women Voters, and Audubon Societies. Oklahoma City Beautiful Inc., has been fighting littering for years.

The Oklahoma City police department announced early this year that it would use its helicopter to locate illegal dump sites, to be followed up by on-site inspections and appropriate action.

Littering is often an economic loss to farmers, whose costly tractor tires or implements may be damaged and whose livestock may be harmed by refuse in hay mowed on right-of-ways.

Citizens who take pride in neat and beautiful surroundings are being invited to support the current statewide drive to reduce littering. It may be too little to say "stop littering" because some seem to prefer trashy roadsides and junky cities.