

Prescribed Grazing

Definition/Purpose

Prescribed Grazing involves managing the intensity, frequency, duration, timing, and number of grazing animals on pastureland in accordance with site production limitations, rate of plant growth, physiological needs of forage plants for production and persistence, and nutritional needs of the grazing animals. The goal of this practice is to reduce accelerated soil erosion and compaction, to improve or maintain riparian and watershed function, to maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and quantity, to improve nutrient distribution, and to improve or maintain desired species composition and vigor of plant communities. Productive pastures maintain wildlife habitat and permeable green space.

Policies

1. This practice must be in a separate stand alone contract. This practice must be maintained on the same pasture acres for three consecutive years.
2. The cooperator can receive incentive of up to the amount listed on the NCACSP average cost list per year for up to 3 years, not to exceed a lifetime cap of \$15,000 per applicant.
3. The cooperator must consistently manage fertility, stocking rates, and stop/start grazing heights (shown in the Target Grazing Height table); to minimize the potential for cost shared fields to be overgrazed and to ensure that a good stand of annual or perennial pasture vegetation is maintained.

Perennial examples

Species	Growth Periods	Target Grazing Height -----inches-----	
		to start	to stop*
Bermudagrass: Common, hybrid & seeded varieties	Apr-Sep	4-6	2-3
	Frosted	3+	2-3
Bluegrass, Kentucky with White Clover	Mar-May	4-6	2-3
	Jun-Aug	6-8	2-4
	Sep-Oct	6-8	2-3
	Nov-Feb	4-6	2-3
Fescue or Orchardgrass with/without Ladino Clover	Feb-Mar	4-6	2-3
	Apr-Jun	6-8	2-3
	Jul-Aug	6-8	3-4
	Sep-Oct	6-8	2-3
Red Clover and mixtures with cool-season grasses	Nov-Jan	4-6	2-3
	Apr-May	6" to bud	3-4
	Jun-Sep	10" to bud	3-4
Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Big Bluestem	Nov-Dec	Frosted	2-3
	Apr-Jun	14-18	5-7
	Jul-Aug	18-22	5-7
	Sep-Oct	16-20	8-12

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Annual examples

The list follows:

Species	Growth Period	Start Grazing Height	Stop Grazing Height
Summer Annuals			
Millet	May – Oct	12” - 24”	5” – 8”
Sorghum Sudangrass	May – Oct	12”- 24”	5”- 8”
Crabgrass	Jun – Sep	8”- 18”	2”- 4”
Winter Annuals			
Small grains	Oct – April	6” – 8”	3”- 4”
Ryegrass	Apr – Jun	6” – 8”	3” – 4”

- * Up to 10% of the prescribed grazing area may fall below the recommended forage grazing stop heights during dormant periods or declared natural disaster to allow external feeding and further regrowth of remaining acreage. This sacrifice grazing area should be identified as part of a plan on the least environmentally sensitive part of the prescribed grazing area. Vegetation shall be re-established as quickly as possible.

- 4. Develop a grazing plan utilizing C-GRAZ (or other approved tool or method) to calculate and document the estimated balance between forage produced or available in the grazing management unit and livestock herd nutritional requirements in the current and planned pasture management system.
- 5. The cooperator must agree to manage the seasonal and periodic movement of grazing animals to ensure effective forage utilization and improve distribution of excreted nutrients (including placement /provision of drinking water sources).
- 6. The cooperator must agree to exclude livestock from surface waters and to implement stream protection system components necessary to protect water quality prior to implementation of a prescribed grazing plan.
- 7. Existing feeding, handling, and watering areas must be located as far from streams as practical, but no closer than 30 feet from streams, unless it is technically impractical. To the extent practical, feeding areas for external feed should be moved frequently to improve the distribution of excreted nutrients.
- 8. Other sacrifice areas shall be located as far from streams as practical, but no closer than 100 feet from streams, unless it is technically impractical.
- 9. The cooperator must apply nutrients in accordance with a nutrient management plan based on realistic yield expectation and a soil test report within the last two years, taking into consideration the excreted nutrients from livestock.
- 10. BMP soil and phosphorus impacts are required on the contract. Include the planted acreage as well. Refer to the Minimum NCACSP Effects Requirements table later in this section for the correct methods of calculation.

Specifications

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North Carolina NRCS Technical Guide, Section IV, Code #528 (Prescribed Grazing)
(September 2008; revised September 2009, revised July 2014)