

Contingency Statement

The Prescribed Grazing Standard (528) requires a “contingency statement” that details potential issues, i.e. drought, excessive rain, seasonal forage fluctuations, prolonged wet soils etc. and adjusts the grazing management to ensure conservation of natural resources and maintenance of economic feasibility. The statement should include how the client will recognize the potential issue in the early phases and a plan of action that will be taken to offset each situation and minimize impact on the resources (SWAPA+H).



Considerations for Contingency Planning:

1. Identify soil types and corresponding limitations, such as drainage, seasonal water table, depth to bedrock, production methods, etc.
2. Identify conditions when livestock will need to be excluded from pastures or times when access needs to be completely restricted.
 - A. Winter- When planning for winter, two items need to be considered
 - Restricted access to sensitive areas
 - Effects of forage production potential on the following year’s grazing season; Overgrazing of dormant stands impacts overall production for the following season
 - B. Wet Weather/Spring Forage Growth- Spring/Fall seasonal
 - Saturated soils- poorly drained, shallow water table
 - Excess growth stage- take hay or rotate/stagger grazing
 - C. Drought periods- limited growth; need to identify alternate feed (warm-season, sorghum-sudan, TMR or hay) and locations
 - D. Surface Water- need setback (P-restricted, 50 feet); identify areas/periods for exclusion
 - E. Shade- needs to be managed to address congregation areas
3. Identify Specific Areas/options for Contingency Statement
 - Current housing/heavy use areas
 - New/Proposed paved heavy use areas
 - New/Proposed Seasonal Use (or sacrifice) Lots

Contingency Statement Examples:

- A. **Winter** - During the winter or periods of freeze/thaw, animals will be fed at and restricted to the barn, the planned heavy use area, or the sacrifice area in Field 7. If using the sacrifice area in Field 7, restrict livestock to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the 2 acre area identified on the Pasture Map. This area is located on well drained soils, is more than 250 feet away from the stream, and is at the top of the hill. Livestock will be limited to no more than 150 days on this area, after which the manure and waste feed will be collected and spread on the crop fields. Move the sacrifice area every year to reduce nutrient accumulation in the soil and re-establish pasture grasses in the spring. When reseeding, keep livestock off the area until the grass is well established, mid July. Soil tests must be taken once every 3 years on this field. In the event that excess nutrient levels develop, seed an annual crop in the spring and harvest to begin to remove excess nutrients.



(Top) Livestock congregation around hay feeder during winter and (bottom) Planned and implemented heavy use area during winter.

Winter - The 10 acres of existing pasture area on this farm do not provide the forage needed for 50 cows. Animals need to be fed in the barn or proposed stabilized heavy use area. The pasture area will be managed for nutrients rather than forage needs. Livestock should be confined to the barnyard or stabilized heavy use area during winter or during periods of freeze/thaw. If a barnyard or stabilized heavy use area is unavailable, animals should be restricted to a smaller sacrifice area proposed for Field 8. This field has well-drained soils and is located away from the stream. This area will be soil tested once every 3 years and will not be part of the pasture acreage during the growing season and will instead be used for hay production. Do not fertilize sacrifice or winter feeding areas, unless fertilizer is recommended following a soil test analysis.

- B. **Wet Weather** - During periods of cool wet weather vegetation will grow at a faster rate. Livestock will need to move through Fields 1, 2, and 4 more quickly to manage vegetation and limit compaction. Livestock will need to be restricted from Field 3 during periods of prolonged wet weather due to the high water table. Due to poorly drained soils, livestock will need to be restricted from Field 5 during rainy periods to reduce compaction problems and improve plant health.



Unplanned livestock activity can create resource concerns.

Seasonal - The hay field (Field 11) will be used for grazing during the summer after the 1st cutting of hay has been harvested and regrowth is sufficient. This field will provide high quality forage for mid- to late summer grazing, and will allow an extended rest period (30 – 35 days) for the other paddocks at a time of the season

when forage production slows. The hay field will be subdivided by temporary fence into three paddocks to allow better management of the forages.

The rotations for Fields 12, 13, and 14 will include 1 year of sorghum once every 3 years. This will provide forage during the hot dry portion of the year and will provide some drought protection. Moveable water troughs will provide a watering location. The fields will be fenced with temporary fence when they are being grazed.

- C. **Drought** - During hot dry weather, forage growth will slow considerably. Fields 1 and 2, which have droughty soils and a shallow depth to bedrock, will be the first areas to show drought stress and will need to be rested longer than Fields 3, 4, and 5 when rainfall is limited. In general, during hot, dry weather, livestock will be moved at a slower pace through the paddocks. If forage regrowth is not occurring fast enough to maintain the minimum stubble height (3 inches) livestock will need to be restricted from the pasture until adequate regrowth occurs. During this period, livestock can be confined to the barn, heavy use area, or the sacrifice area in Field 7 and provided emergency feed. The soils in Field 7 are well drained and more than 250 feet from the nearest surface water body. If using this area as a sacrifice area, collect waste feed and manure, reseed, and soil test once every 3 years.
- D. **Surface Water** - Livestock will be fenced out of the stream that runs through Fields 6, 7 and 8. Access to the stream will be limited to existing and proposed livestock crossings and flash grazing of Field 6. Field 6 should be divided into 4 smaller paddocks to allow flash grazing during the dry summer period, limiting animals to an area for no more than 3 days.
- E. **Shade** – Animals will congregate in shaded areas during the hot part of the year. It may be necessary to provide a moveable temporary shade structure to limit denuded areas from forming under the tree line in Field 4. If a temporary shade structure is not available, and the area near the tree line becomes bare, remove animals, reseed, and restrict access until the grass is well established.



Implemented BMP's including shelter for equine sacrifice area.