Practice Specification
Forage Harvest Management (Code 511)

Forage Harvest Requirements for Plant Species

FORAGE SPECIES	STUBBLE HEIGHT 1/ (inches)	OPTIMUM CUTTING TIMES OR HARVEST INTERVAL 2/ 3/ 4/
GRASSES		
Bahiagrass	3-4	1st Cut: Boot to early bloom; thereafter at 28 day intervals or when 12” regrowth
Bermudagrass	2-3	Boot to early heading; thereafter at 25-35 day intervals or when lower leaves start turning brown
Big and sand bluestem	4-6	Boot to early heading or when 24-30 inches tall. Cut prior to July 20th.
Crabgrass	2-3	Boot to early head; thereafter at 28 day intervals
Eastern gamagrass	6-8	Early boot; thereafter at 40-45 day intervals
Fescue, tall	3-4	Boot to early bloom stage; thereafter at 4 - 6 week intervals or 8” regrowth. **5/**
Indiangrass	4-6	Prior to boot or when 18-30 inches tall. Cut prior to July 20th.
Johnsongrass	6	Pre-boot to boot; thereafter at 25 - 30 day intervals
Native hay meadow	4 - 6	Only one Cutting, prior to July 20th: At boot to pre- heading
Old world bluestems	3-4	At or prior to boot; thereafter at 30 - 35 day intervals or 12-16” regrowth
Orchardgrass	3-4	Boot to early bloom stage; thereafter at 4 - 6 week intervals or 8” regrowth. **5/**
Ryegrass, perennial	4	Boot to soft dough; thereafter at 25-30 day intervals. **5/**
Smooth bromegrass	3-4	Early to mid-bloom; thereafter, when regrowth is 8” or new basal sprouts appear at soil surface. **5/**
Summer Annuals: Sudangrass, millet, sorghum- sudan hybrids	6-10	At pre-boot stage or about 24-36 inches tall; thereafter when regrowth is 24”
Switchgrass	4-6	Early boot. Cut prior to July 20th
Weeping lovegrass	3-4	Pre - Boot to early heading; thereafter at 25-35 days
Wheatgrass, Western and Tall	3-4	Early to full head; thereafter when regrowth reaches 8- 10” **5/**

FORAGE SPECIES	STUBBLE HEIGHT 1/ (inches)	OPTIMUM CUTTING TIMES OR HARVEST INTERVAL 2/ 3/ 4/
Wheatgrass, Intermediate/pubescent	3-4	Early boot to full head; thereafter when re-growth reaches 8-10" **5/**
Winter Annuals: wheat, barley, rye, triticale	2-4	Boot to early dough stage
Warm Season CRP grasses **6/**	4-6	July 2 – August 10
Cool Season CRP grasses **6/**	3-4	August 1 – September 1
LEGUMES		
Alfalfa	4	1st cutting: Bud stage to ¼ bloom; thereafter when 1/10 to 1/4 bloom and last cutting 6 weeks before first killing frost
Arrowleaf clover, berseem clover, birdsfoot trefoil, crimson clover, 'Ladino' clover, red clover	3	Early to 1/4 bloom, if with companion grass, cut at correct stage for the grass
'Cicer' milkvetch	3	1/10 - 1/4 bloom
Cowpeas	3	early to mid-bloom
Hairy vetch	3	Early to ¼ bloom
Lespedeza (common, 'Kobe' 'Korean')	3	pre-bloom to early bloom
Lespedeza, sericea	3-4	Cut when plant reaches 12-15" height
Sweetclovers	3	When first blooms appear

1/ Stubble heights are considered minimum cutting heights. If a forage plant is harvested below the recommended minimum cutting height regrowth will be slowed, opportunities for weed encroachment will increase, subsequent productivity will decline, and the stand may die.

2/ Allow sufficient time for plant recovery after last cutting before first frost date. Generally, this will be generally 40 days for legumes and 35 days for perennial grasses.

3/ Cutting times are based on growth stages and are for OPTIMUM quantity and quality. Later harvest usually yield more forage of lower quality.

4/ Some forage crops may not achieve needed regrowth except under irrigation and fertility; therefore subsequent cuttings may not be possible

5/ Do not harvest June - August.

6/ The purpose for managed haying or grazing for CRP acres is to maintain the productivity, health and vigor of the desired plant community promote wildlife benefits; and protection of the soil and water resources. These guidelines may not provide the highest quality or quantity of hay but provides the opportunity for protecting wildlife nesting cover during critical times(spring and early summer for warm season grasses) and removal of old growth prior to initiation of new growth. These guidelines are to be followed with actively enrolled CRP acres.

GROWTH STAGE DEFINITIONS

Boot – Seedhead in upper sheath but prior to emergence, top of stem swollen

Early Head / bloom – Tip of seadhead (flowers) begins to emerge

Medium Head / Mid-bloom – About 50% of the seedheads emerged or emerging

Full head / bloom – Seadheads fully emerged but prior to flowering, peak pollen shed

Early Bud – Bud begins to swell and become apparent at a few nodes

Late Bud – Several nodes with buds; buds more swollen

Dough – Seed becoming harder and have a dough-like consistency

Late bloom – All flowers out

3. Specific Site Requirements

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