

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

PRESCRIBED GRAZING

(Acre)
Code 528A

DEFINITION

The controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing or browsing animals.

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to accomplish one or more of the following:

- * Maintain a stable and desired plant community, or improve or maintain the health and vigor of selected plant(s).
- * Provide or maintain food, cover and shelter for animals of concern.
- * Improve or maintain animal health and productivity.
- * Maintain or improve water quality and quantity.
- * Reduce accelerated soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable For All The Purposes Stated Above.

The level of herbage removal or grazing intensity by animals will be applied within the acceptable tolerance of the key forage species present upon the site and management goals of the landowner or manager. This level of herbage removal will be plant species specific, and will reflect the growth/maturity and season of year that

grazing occurs. In addition, the health and vigor of non-key forage plants common to the site will not be sacrificed in the application of this practice standard.

Management goals will be developed by incorporating the land owners or managers goals with the quality criteria in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Refer to Sections I and II of the FOTG for additional guidance.

On rangeland, grazed forest, and/or native pasture, no more than 50% by weight of the total annual production of key forage species will be grazed by livestock and/or wildlife. For criteria in selecting key forage species refer to Chapter of the National Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997. If prescribed grazing is applied to a field, pasture or paddock for which herbage removal by livestock will only occur during the dormant season, then 65% by weight of the total annual production of key forage plants may be grazed. Document utilization of key forage species on form SCS-RANGE-414.

For domestic or tame forage species managed on pasture or hay lands, do not graze below the minimum height during the grazing period to maintain plant health and vigor. The criteria for common forage crops are shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Grazing Height for Common Forages

Forage Crop	Min. Ht. To Begin Grazing (Inches)	Min. Ht. During Grazing (Inches)
Jointvetch (Aeschynomene)	12	8
Bahiagrass	6	2
Imp. Bermudagrass	6	4

Conservation practice standards area reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

and Stargrasses		
Carpon Desmodium	6	2
Clover, Arrow/Crimson	6	3
Clover, White	6	3
Indigo, Hairy	24	12
Limpoglass (Hemarthria spp.)	12	4
Oats	6	4
Perennial Peanut (Arbrook)	12	6
Perennial Peanut (Florigraze)	6	4
Pangola Digitgrass	8	6
Pearlmillet	24	12
Rye	10	4
Ryegrass	6	3
Forage Sorghum	24	12
Wheat/Triticale	6	4

Base the frequency of defoliation (grazing) on the rate and physiological conditions of plant growth. Length of grazing periods will be based on the rate of growth.

A Prescribed Grazing plan will be developed for use as an initial guide and modified as conditions warrant.

Additional Criteria for Maintaining or Improving Plant Health and Vigor.

Duration and intensity of grazing will be based on plant health requirements and expected productivity of key forage species to meet the management unit (pasture or paddock) objectives.

Enough vegetative cover will be maintained to prevent accelerated soil erosion due to wind or water and to maintain soil moisture.

Additional Criteria to Improve Animal Health and Productivity.

Grazing should be applied in accordance with the needs of wildlife populations present within the operating unit. Requirements of food, water, cover, and nesting and/or breeding habitat shall be considered in the application of this practice standard. Guidance on the habitat requirement of wildlife may be found in the "Management for

Wildlife, a Supplement to Wildlife Standards and Specifications for Florida" in your reference file. Additional guidance can be obtained from the Local Agricultural Extension Agent, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission (FG&FWFC), or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Movement of domestic animals will be in a manner to improve and/or maintain animal health and performance, and reduce or prevent spread of disease, parasites, and contact with harmful insects.

Grazing should be applied in accordance with forage quality and quantity criteria that best meets the production requirements for the kind and/or class of animal.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing in or near surface waters will be applied in such a manner that the impacts to vegetative and water quality will be positive.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing will be applied to enhance nutrient cycling through improved manure distribution and increased rate of decomposition

Additional Criteria to Improve Water Quality and Quantity.

Application of this practice will manipulate the intensity, frequency, duration, and season of grazing to:

1. Ensure optimum water infiltration,
2. Maintain or improve riparian and upland area vegetation,
3. Protect stream banks from erosion,
4. Manage for deposition of fecal material away from water bodies,
5. Promote ecological and economical stable plant communities throughout the management unit, which meet landowner objectives.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing in or near surface waters will be applied in such a manner that the impacts will not degrade the vegetative and/or water quality resources.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Soil Erosion and Maintain or Improve Soil Condition.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing shall be managed to minimize compaction or other detrimental effects.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing shall be managed to sustain an adequate vegetative cover to prevent accelerated soil erosion as measured by the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE). For assistance with the RUSLE, refer to Chapter 6 of the Florida Agronomy Field Handbook.

Grazing shall be planned and managed to ensure healthy vigorous plants that can improve soil tilth, and store nitrogen and carbon in the soil.

CONSIDERATIONS

Supplemental feed may be necessary to meet the desired nutritional levels for animals of concern. The location of supplemental feed, salt and minerals should be considered to reduce negative impacts to soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. It is advisable to locate salt and supplement feeders away from water sources.

Use of natural or artificial shelter or shade will be included as part of this practice when conditions demand.

Animal husbandry requirements, which may affect the design of the grazing prescription, will be considered.

Prescribed Grazing should consider the needs of other enterprises utilizing the same land, such as hunting, camping and other recreational uses.

Prescribed grazing schedules should be designed to account for variations in the growth and amount of forage available due to seasonal or annual variations in temperatures, precipitation and hydrology.

Grazing periods should be short (1-8 days) provided enough pastures are available in the grazing system to allow an adequate forage regrowth period. The regrowth period is usually 15 to 28 days in the early summer and 30 to 42 days in the late summer and fall.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

A Prescribed Grazing plan will be prepared for all fields, pastures, or paddocks. Incorporate any additional feed supplementation needed for the operating unit or portion of an operating unit being addressed in the Prescribed Grazing schedule. Grazing schedules will be recorded on form FL-ECS-1 or another manner that is readily understood and useable by the decision-maker in their daily operations. The manner of documentation will depend upon the size and complexity of the operating unit and the details required for a grazing prescription.

A prescribed grazing schedule will include the following information:

1. Documentation of the expected forage quantity and quality for each management unit(s), i.e., pastures during the grazing season.
2. Documentation of the number of domestic livestock by kinds and class, and the number of grazing/browsing wildlife of concern anticipated within the management unit(s), if applicable.
3. The grazing plan should identify the dominant forage species or mixture, the minimum grazing height for the forage species used and the grazing season for each forage species.
4. Documentation of nutritional surpluses and deficiencies from the forage resources for each kind and class of livestock and grazing/browsing wildlife of concern in the management unit(s).
5. Supplemental feed requirements needed to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of livestock and grazing/browsing wildlife of concern in the management unit(s).
6. Development of a planned grazing schedule for livestock, which identifies periods of grazing, resting, and other treatment activities for each management unit(s).
7. A contingency plan that details potential problems, i.e., drought, and a guide for adjusting the grazing prescription to

insure resource management and economic feasibility without resource degradation will be developed.

8. The Prescribed Grazing schedule will specify when evaluations of the current feed and forage supply should be made.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The manager will apply prescribed grazing on a continuing basis in accordance with the Prescribed Grazing plan and make adjustments as needed to ensure that the concept and objectives of its application are met.

If an imbalance is determined the Prescribed Grazing plan shall be adjusted accordingly or other harvesting techniques applied.

REFERENCES

FOTG Sections I, II, III,
National Range and Pasture Handbook
Management for Wildlife, a Supplement to
Wildlife Standards and Specifications for
Florida.
Form SCS-RANGE-414
Form FL-ECS-1
Florida Agronomy Handbook