



# PRESCRIBED GRAZING

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

528

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

April 2009

Landowner \_\_\_\_\_



## WHAT IS PRESCRIBED GRAZING

Prescribed grazing is defined as managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals.

## PURPOSE

Prescribed grazing may be applied as part of a conservation management system to achieve one or more of the following:

- Improve or maintain desired species composition and vigor of plant communities
- Improve or maintain quantity and quality of forage for grazing and browsing animals health and productivity
- Improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and quantity
- Improve or maintain riparian and watershed function
- Reduce accelerated soil erosion, and maintain or improve soil condition
- Improve or maintain the quantity and quality of food and/or cover available for wildlife
- Manage fine fuel loads to achieve desired conditions.

## WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES

Prescribed grazing is applicable on all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed.

## GENERAL CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS

Removal of herbage will be in accordance with site production limitations, rate of plant growth, the physiological needs of forage plants and the nutritional needs of the animals.

Adequate quantity and quality drinking water will be supplied at all times during the period of occupancy.

Adjust intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing to meet the desired objectives for the plant communities and the associated resources, including the grazing and/or browsing animal.

Manage the kind of animal, animal number, grazing distribution, length of grazing and/or browsing periods and timing of use to

provide grazed plants sufficient recovery time to meet planned objectives. The recovery period of non-grazing can be provided for the entire year or during the growing season of key plants. Deferment (non-grazing period less than one year) and/or rest (non-grazing period equal or greater than one year) will be planned for critical periods of plant needs.

Develop contingency plans to deal with expected episodic disturbance events, e.g. insect infestation, drought, wildfire, etc.

Supplemental feed and/or minerals will be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock. Dietary needs of livestock will be based on the National Research Council's Nutrient Requirements of Domestic Animals or similar scientific sources.

Biosecurity safeguards will be in place to prevent the spread of disease between on-farm or ranch classes of livestock and between livestock farm or ranch units.

Shelter in the form of windbreaks, sheds, shade structures, and other protective features will be used where conditions warrant protecting livestock from severe weather, intense heat/humidity, and predators.

Minimize concentrated livestock areas to enhance nutrient distribution and improve or maintain ground cover and riparian/floodplain plant community structure and functions.

Minimize concentrated livestock areas, trailing, and trampling to reduce soil compaction, excess runoff and erosion.

Plan intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing to provide for the development and maintenance of the plant structure, density and diversity needed for the desired fish and wildlife species of concern.

Plan intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing to reduce hazardous fuel loads.

Plan intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing to manage fuel continuity, load and other conditions to facilitate prescribed burns.

Protect soil, water, air, plant and animal resources when locating livestock feeding, and supplementing, handling and watering facilities.

Livestock feeding, handling, and watering facilities will be designed and installed in a manner to improve and/or maintain animal distribution. These facilities will also be designed and installed to minimize stress, the spread of disease, parasites, contact with harmful organisms and toxic plants.

Utilization or stubble height target levels are tools that can be used in conjunction with monitoring to help ensure that resource conservation and producer objectives are met.

Where practical and beneficial, start the grazing sequence in a different management unit each growing season.

When weeds are a significant problem prescribed grazing and/or browsing should be implemented in conjunction with other pest management practices to promote plant community resistance to invasive species and protect desired plant communities.

Prescribed grazing should consider the needs of other enterprises utilizing the same land, such as wildlife and recreational uses.

The prescribed grazing plan shall conform to all applicable federal, state and local laws. Seek measures to avoid adverse effects to endangered, threatened, and candidate species and their habitats.

Consider improving carbon sequestration in biomass and soils through management of grazing and/or browsing to produce the desired results.

If nutrients are being applied, Nutrient Management (590) will be applied

Prepare a prescribed grazing plan for all planned management units where grazing will occur.

## Requirements for Implementing the Prescribed Grazing Practices Standard

The Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard is implemented to properly harvest forage with grazing animals to achieve a specified purpose(s) as determined by the landowner. To help ensure this objective is met, a grazing plan needs to be developed as set forth in the plans and specifications of this practice standard. The following list of actions needs to be completed to ensure the Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard is followed.

1. Goals and Objectives – Clearly state the purposes for which the Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard is being implemented. These should be stated in the practice narrative
2. Resource Inventory – During the inventory process, the type of grazing land for which prescribed grazing is being planned needs to be identified. Louisiana Range and Pasture Job Sheet 24: *Inventorying Grazing Land Resources* may be used to assess the animal, forage, soil and structural components of a livestock operation for grazing lands. Additional information in the *Guide to Pasture Condition Scoring* and *Pasture Condition Score Sheet* may be used during the inventory process to rate key indicators and causative factors when evaluating the condition of the pasture resource. The documents can be found under the Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard in Section IV of the eFOTG.
3. Forage-Animal Balance – Ensure forage produced or available meets forage demand of livestock and/or wildlife of concern. *The Forage Budget Worksheet* documents the estimated animal demand and the estimated forage production. The resulting values will show where forage surpluses and deficiencies occur throughout the year. An overall stocking rate can be determined, based on the landowners objectives related to supplemental feeding levels. This information should be included in the practice narrative.
4. Grazing Plan – For livestock operations, identify and document anticipated periods of grazing and rest for each management unit in the prescribed grazing practice narrative. It should be noted that grazing/rest periods are only estimates and will fluctuate based on several different variables. Planned pest management, brush management, or nutrient management activities should also be documented in the appropriate practice narrative.
5. Contingency Plan – Develop a plan that details actions to be taken to adjust the grazing prescription during droughts or floods that will ensure economic feasibility without resource degradation. This information should be included in the practice narrative.
6. Monitoring Plan – Monitoring is needed to assess whether the grazing strategy is meeting objectives. For rangeland, grazed woodland, and native pasture, identify the key areas and key plants that the manager should evaluate in making grazing management decisions. Document the results using Louisiana Pasture and Range Jobsheet 25 *Determining Degree of Use*.

The proper use of culturally managed forages on pastureland and cropland will be determined by measuring the average residual grazing heights established for a particular species. Use the Louisiana Range and Pasture Job Sheet 23 *Determining Pasture Utilization Using Average Stubble Heights* to determine and document proper use of pastureland and cropland.

Because Prescribed Grazing is applied on a continuing basis, the land manager is responsible for ensuring the management components of this plan are followed. These components include: proper use of existing forages, implementing the grazing plan and contingency plan as stated in the conservation plan, and maintaining the forage-animal balance. Proper grazing management will require making adjustments to ensure forage demand and forage supply remain balanced.

**PRESCRIBED GRAZING – SPECIFICATIONS SHEET**

**Landowner/Cooperator** \_\_\_\_\_

**Field Office** \_\_\_\_\_

**Plan Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose/Objective of the Practice (Check all that apply)**

- Improve or maintain desired species composition and vigor of plant communities
- Improve or maintain quantity and quality of forage for grazing and browsing animals health and productivity
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- Manage fine fuel loads to achieve desired conditions

**Requirements for Implementing Prescribed Grazing. All Items Should be Completed**

- Goals and objectives stated in practice narrative
- Resource Inventory completed using Range and Pasture Jobsheet 24 *Inventorying Grazing Land Resources*
- Forage-Animal Balance documented using the *Forage Budget Excel Worksheet*
- Grazing Plan documented in the practice narrative
- Contingency Plan documented in the practice narrative
- Monitoring Plan using Louisiana Range and Pasture Jobsheet 23 *Determining Pasture Utilization Using Average Stubble Heights* or Jobsheet 24 *Determining Degree of Use*

**Operation and Maintenance**

Prescribed Grazing will be applied on a continuing basis throughout the occupation period of all grazing units. Adjustments will be made as needed to ensure that the goals and objectives of the prescribed grazing strategy are met.

**Additional Specifications and Notes**

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**I certify that this practice is designed and planned according to NRCS-Louisiana Standards and Specifications.**

**Designed by** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_