

FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

SPECIFICATIONS

Nutrient Management

Use the University of Nebraska's recommendations for nutrient applications as determined by a soil test. Coordinate this practice with Nutrient Management (590).

Harvesting

Harvesting at a 3" stubble height generally will allow for adequate regeneration of most perennial species. Table 1 lists minimum regrowth height by species needed before frost.

Weed/Brush Control

A weed control program must be established when needed.

- Competition from annual or perennial weeds and grasses may be controlled with chemicals. All chemicals used must be registered, handled and applied in accordance with product label directions. For guidelines refer to the GUIDE FOR HERBICIDE USE IN NEBRASKA (Section II - Water Quantity and Quality Interpretations).
- Prescribed burning can be used to reduce excessive plant residue that may inhibit spraying as an alternative to chemical weed control methods. Refer to Prescribed Burning (338).
- Mechanical removal of annual and/or perennial weeds may be necessary if they are competing with desired plants and adversely affecting hay quality and yield.
- Noxious weeds must be controlled according to Nebraska Noxious Weed laws.

Native Forage

A. Vegetative Zones I & II

(a) Forage on range sites that has a water table throughout the growing season or receives additional moisture throughout a major portion of the growing season may be harvested (aftermath grazing) once a year.

(b) On upland range sites where plant roots do not reach the water table or do not receive additional moisture, if hay is harvested, do not hay or graze during the active growing season for two years.

B. Vegetative Zones III & IV

Forage on all range sites may be harvested once a year unless moisture conditions prevent adequate recovery and growth.

Time of Harvest

Stage of maturity affects quality and quantity of forage. Table 1 reflects harvest timing and height for maximum protein and TDN yields for various species.

If higher quality is desired a slightly earlier harvest date is needed.

If higher quantity is desired a slightly later harvest date is needed.

Frequent early or late harvest will result in low plant vigor and/or stand loss.

A forage harvest management plan shall include the following information:

- Location - field numbers, acreage, and map or sketch of areas planned and areas excluded.
- Key species, growth stage for cutting, cutting heights, regrowth by killing frost, etc.
- Plan date and signature(s).

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

NE-T.G. Notice 467
Section IV
NRCS-OCTOBER 1998

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DEFINITIONS:

Harvesting plants at their proper growth stages will maintain stand and vigor and ensure a higher quality, palatable forage.

- Boot - head in upper sheath, but prior to emergence
- Early Head - tip of head emerging on not more than 10 percent of the stems
- Medium Head - about 50 percent of the heads emerged or emerging

- Full Head - heads fully emerged but prior to any flowering
- Early bud - no flower color showing on 80 percent of plants
- Late Bud - Shows flower color on 80 percent
- Early Bloom - 10 percent flowers out
- Late Bloom - all flowers out

Rangeland may be harvested for hay when proper management techniques are applied.

Table 1 - Approximate growth stage, cutting height (inches), and minimum leaf length (inches), before killing frost.

SPECIES	CUTTING	GROWTH STAGE	CUTTING HEIGHT	REGROWTH BY FROST
GRASSES				
Wildryes	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10" tall	3	4
Creeping foxtail	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10 " tall	3	5
Intermediate wheatgrass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10" tall	3	7
Pubescent wheatgrass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10" tall	3	7
Reed canarygrass	1st = 2nd =	early boot when basal sprouts appear	3	8
Tall fescue	1st	prior to heading	3	5
Meadow brome grass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10 " tall	3	4

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Smooth brome grass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10" tall	3	4
Tall wheatgrass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10 " tall	3	7
Western wheatgrass	1st = 2nd =	early to full head when 8 - 10" tall	3	5
Orchardgrass	1st = 2nd =	boot to early head when 8 - 10" tall	3	6
Crested wheatgrass	1st = 2nd =	boot to early head when 8 - 10" tall	3	4
Green needlegrass	1st = 2nd =	boot to early head when 8 - 10" tall	3	5
Big & sand bluestem	1st	Boot to medium head	3	8
Indiangrass	1st	Boot to medium head	3	8
Prairie sandreed	1st	Boot to medium head	3	8
Switchgrass	1st	Boot to medium head	3	8
Eastern gamagrass	1st	Boot to medium head	3	8
Native prairie (mixed and tallgrass)	1st	Boot to medium head for key species	3	8

SPECIES	CUTTING	GROWTH STAGE	CUTTING HEIGHT	REGROWTH BY FROST
LEGUMES				
Alfalfa	1st = 2nd =	late bud to early bloom early bloom - 1/4 bloom	2	7
Alsike clover	1st	1/4th to 1/2 bloom	2	6
Red clover	1st	1/4 to 1/2 bloom	2	6
Cicer milkvetch	1st = 2nd =	at all stages Every 45 days	3	5
Sweetclovers	All	bud to early flower	3	4
Birdsfoot trefoil,	1st	early flower to 1/4 bloom	3	5
OTHER				
Grass - legume mixture	All	Base on legume	-	-

