Prescribed Grazing

Illinois Job Sheet – JS528 **_November 2012_**

Client_____
Farm No._____Tract No._____
Field(s) _____ Acres_____
Designed by:_____Date:_____

The factors used to design prescribed grazing systems vary considerably with environmental extremes and management decisions. Producers should monitor their pastures for minimum grazing heights in order to maintain vigorous and healthy forage stands.

Always move the animals when the forage is grazed to the minimum grazing height specified regardless of the number of days that they have been in the pasture.

IDENTIFY PURPOSES

- ☐ 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.

PRESCRIBED GRAZING ON PASTURES

- For cool season grasses and/or legumes begin initial grazing in the **spring** when a height of 3 – 4 inches has been reached (18 inches for warm season grasses). After the first grazing cycle then the re-growth should be 6 – 8 inches for the remainder of the grazing season (18 inches for warm season grasses). Remove livestock when grazing height has been reduced to_____inches. Average rest for paddocks is normally 25 to 50 days, depending on forage and time of year and growth conditions. (Refer to Prescribed Grazing Standard, Code 528, Table 3 and IL Graze4 Worksheets).
- Use estimated safe stocking rates which match pasture production. Planned animal type:_____
  Number of Animal Units (AUs) estimated for the tract, pasture, or farm:_____

  (Number of. Head _____ X average weight _____ /1000 = _____ AUs)
- Rotational grazing is needed on any species or mixture of species for stand longevity and maximum forage production. To maintain forage quality graze for approximately_____days to attain a **minimum grazing height** and then remove livestock for _____days to allow for proper forage re-growth. Number of grazing days estimated for tract, pasture, or farm _____ (Refer to IL Graze4 Worksheets)
- Number of pasture subdivisions (paddocks) planned_____ (Refer to IL Graze4 Worksheets)
- Percent harvest efficiency planned_____% (Refer to IL Graze4 Worksheets)
- Fall grazing without a rest period is harmful to legumes and certain grasses. Approximate fall rest periods (30 days before frost) (Refer to Prescribed Grazing Standard, Code 528, Table 1 for minimum heights for overwintering)

Species	Plant Suitability Zones		
	I (North)	II (Central)	III (South)
Cool Season	9/1 -10/1	9/15 – 10/15	9/20 – 10-20
Warm Season	9/10 – 10/10	9/15 – 10/15	9/20 – 10/20

- Clip/mow pastures to:
  1) control weeds and brush as necessary,
  2) to promote even forage growth,
  3) to retain forages in a vegetative growth state, or
  4) to remove seed heads from avoided forages.
- Surplus forage may be removed as hay or silage, or clipped and left (Refer to Forage Harvest Management Standard, Code 511)

- Legumes should comprise at least 30% of the forage stand, by dry matter weight, in a grass/legume mixture for most livestock species to improve forage nutrition and supply ample nitrogen for grass growth.

  CAUTION: Do not exceed 20%, by dry matter weight, of legumes in forage stands for sheep, to avoid breeding problems.

- Soil tests should be used as a guide for the timing and amounts of fertility added. Soil tests will be taken in _____(date) and the results used to develop a nutrient management plan. Repeat soils tests every 4 yrs.
- Providing clean fresh water within a distance of 800 ft. of each pasture improves the rate of gain and forage utilization. Refer to the pipeline and watering facility design, if applicable.
- Salt and mineral distributed throughout the pasture are essential for good livestock management and uniform grazing. Separate water and salt/mineral locations in the pasture for better grazing distribution.
- Livestock should be excluded from woodland, wetlands, streams, lakes, and ponds. Flash grazing is a technique to use on sensitive areas. Flash grazing is the short duration grazing on an area usually of one day or less to glean the forages available and aid in control of unwanted herbaceous or woody species.

Record Actual Observations: (Example)

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Illinois

Documentation Record for Grazing Management

Name: Joe Grazier
Year: 20xx Farm No.: 999 Tract No.: 9999
Record Actual Observations
IL-528-1 Grazing Management Record

Field/ Pasture	Acres	Livestock Speicie/class	Livestock K Wt.*	Livestock No.	Key Forage Species	Date Livestock In	Begin Graze Ht.*	Date Livestock Out	End Graze Ht.	Days Grazed	Days Rest	Precip. Type/ inches	Remarks/ Observation Weed Pressure Wildlife Use etc.
P 1	4.0	Cows	1150	16	Orchard/RC	6/15	7"	6/21	3.5"	6	30	0.31	Dug out 5 thistle
P 2	5.0	Cows	1150	16	Fescue/RC	6/21	7"	6/28	3.0"	7	30	—	

- Note: Livestock weight estimated
- Beginning Graze Ht., estimated (For accuracy measure at least 10 plant locations)
- Ending Graze Ht. estimated (For accuracy measure at least 10 plant locations)
- Be sure to measure same species for grazed and un-grazed pastures.

The practice, as applied, meets or exceeds USDA/NRCS standards and specifications:

Signature: Date:

MAINTENANCE FERTILIZATION

- Soils test should be used as a guide for the timing and amounts of fertility added.
- As a general rule, 50 pounds of nitrogen should be applied annually where mixtures contain 20-30 percent legumes. The nitrogen application should be done in smaller increments (30-50#) and preferably wait till June or after the first grazing cycle to begin. Fall applied nitrogen; (50-80#) should be applied in August to aid in the stockpiling process, for winter usage. **Add no nitrogen when legumes make up more that 30 percent of the mixture. High nitrogen rates encourage grass species.**
- Phosphorus and potassium should be applied based on forage yields. Generally, 12 pounds of P2O5 and 50 pounds of K2O per ton of dry matter are removed from grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures.
- Soil test should be between 6.2 and 7.0 for pH rating for grass/legumes mixtures for best results.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Carrying capacity (number of animals/grazing area) will be managed by the participant to prevent over grazing. **The recommended minimum grazing height will be used as the gauge with which to end grazing in order to avoid over utilization and allow sufficient regrowth to maintain plant health and vigor. (FOTG 528)**
- Climatic variable and extremes, such as moisture and temperature, should be considered when managing estimated carrying capacity and rotation frequencies.
- Intensive grazing strategies that include items such as creep grazing, temporary fencing and alternative water and mineral placements can be used to improve utilization efficiency.
- Grazing frequency and duration, and stocking rates may need to be reduced near environmentally sensitive areas such as streams, wetlands, and farm ponds.
- Grazing strategies shall consider wildlife populations present within the grazing unit. Requirements of food, water, cover, nesting, and breeding habitats can be met during the practice application.
- Consult with the NRCS biologist or biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for additional guidance as necessary.