

Conservation Cover

Introduced or Non-Native Cover for Wildlife

KY Conservation Practice Job Sheet

Code 327



PURPOSE

This conservation cover job sheet will be used in establishing pure stands of introduced species of grasses and mixed stands of introduced grasses and compatible legumes and/or forbs as part of a conservation plan.

This practice does not apply to plantings for forage production or to critical area plantings to control erosion. Conservation cover can enhance wildlife objectives depending on the vegetative species used and the management practiced.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT

In most instances, seed used should conform to the minimum state standards for purity, germination and other features. Seed tags and other information may be requested by NRCS representatives to verify compliance.

Any fertilizer and lime applications planned, must be made according to University of Kentucky (UK) recommendations and based on a soil test analysis consistent with UK laboratory soil test procedures.

Species selected shall be from those identified in Table 7 of the (327) Conservation Cover practice standard, those identified in the table of this document or as recommended by Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) and approved by the State Biologist.

A. Competition Control

Competition (weed) control is critical to ensuring a good stand of introduced grasses and legumes. This control should begin prior to the seeding and seedbed operations. Either conventional seedbed preparation or herbicide applications or both can be used to control weeds prior to planting.

Several steps are required to get successful competition control when using a herbicide to eradicate existing vegetation. Some herbicide applications will be made prior to planting (pre-planting) to burn down existing vegetation. Other applications may be made after planting (post-planting) to help control competition during establishment. All herbicide products must be used according to label specifications. If pesticide application is used for establishment or maintenance refer to the WinPST document attached for associated risks.

The first step is to remove excessive top growth that may be present. Removal can be accomplished by mowing or grazing the area immediately prior to beginning the recommended herbicide application program. If possible after mowing, remove the hay to allow for better herbicide contact (check program rules to determine if grazing/hay removal is allowed).

The recommended herbicide program may involve a fall application plus a spring application or one or two spring applications. The herbicide applications must be made while the target vegetation is rapidly growing (preferably at a 6 to 8 inch height).

Two herbicide applications are normally recommended for dense stands of fescue or other sod forming species and in other areas where competition may not be controlled by one application.

NRCS does not recommend any specific herbicides or make specific herbicide recommendations. Always read and follow instructions on the label. Herbicides must be applied according to the directions, precautions and restrictions indicated on the label.

Recommendations and information regarding the use of herbicides may be obtained by contacting the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

B. Planting

Planting Dates for Cool-Season Grasses and Legumes for KY are as follows:

Western & Southern—MLRA 120, 122, 131, & 134	
Optimum	02/15 – 03/15 08/20 – 09/20
Acceptable	02/01 -- 04/15 08/10 -- 10/01
Dormant (Legumes only)	01/01 – 03/01
Northern & Eastern—MLRA 121, 124, 125, & 126	
Optimum	02/15 -- 03/15 08/20 – 09/20
Acceptable	02/01 – 05/01 08/01 -- 10/01
Dormant (Legumes only)	12/15 -- 03/15

Conventional Tillage

Conventional seeding may be used for establishment on areas where weedy competition will be lessened and where the risk of soil erosion is minimal. A seedbed may be prepared by disking two or more times to make a clean, firm, and dry seedbed. As a general guide, a seedbed is considered firm when footprints leave no more than a half-inch deep depression. Roll or cultipack immediately prior to and after seeding to ensure good soil-to-seed contact. Seeds are usually broadcast using a drop seeder or other similar equipment.

Reduced Tillage

A seedbed may be prepared with a chisel, disk or other similar implement that leaves a significant amount of residue on the surface of the soil. Ensure that the seedbed is dry prior to planting. Herbicides are normally used to kill existing vegetation prior to tillage. If using a broadcast seeder, roll or cultipack immediately prior to and after seeding to ensure good soil-to-seed contact. If using a seed drill, rolling and cultipacking are not necessary. Make sure that the depth of seeding is set correctly for the species being planted.

No-Tillage

No-till establishment is the preferred method since soil disturbance is minimal, thus reducing weed competition and the risk of soil erosion.

In no-till planting, a seed drill is used to place seed at a prescribed depth (usually between ¼ and ½ inch below the soil surface) depending on the species, with minimal soil disturbance.

Two common mistakes when no-till planting cool season grasses include pulling the drill too fast and not stopping to check seeding depth often enough. Also ensure that the seedbed is dry.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Some types and dates of maintenance mentioned below may be prohibited by various USDA programs. Contact the local NRCS office to ensure compliance with program rules.

When managing conservation cover, never disturb (such as mowing or disking) more than 50 percent of the field in any one year.

After establishment mowing should not be performed between May 15th and August 1st which is the primary nesting season for ground-nesting birds and animals.

After planting, weed control remains an important part of introduced grass establishment for up to two years after planting.

To control competition and prevent weed seed formation, stands may benefit from top clipping as needed from May through July especially during the establishment period. Post-emergent herbicides may also be used to control competition during the two-year establishment period as recommended by UK Cooperative Extension Service, NRCS, KDFWR or other technical service provider.

All planted species must be taken into consideration when implementing a herbicide treatment. For example, do not use a broad spectrum broadleaf weed herbicide to control ragweed only to kill all the forbs that were also planted.

See any additional information sections of this job sheet for program specific requirements or additional technical recommendations that may be applicable.

SPECIFICATIONS

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Site-specific requirements are listed on the specification sheet. Specifications are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and the (327) Conservation Cover practice standard. Information on this job sheet is considered to be part of the conservation plan.

Client:		Date:	
Field(s):		Farm #:	Tract #:
Designed By:		Purpose:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Practice for specific program (Refer to specific program requirements and guidelines) Program _____ Practice _____			

WinPST attached (Refer to the windows pesticide screening tool for risks associated with pesticide use.)

See attached information regarding herbicide/pesticide applications.

Layout (use additional sheets if necessary)	Field _____	Field _____
Total Area Planted (acres)		
Method of Establishment ¹		
Fall Site Prep Treatment (if applicable)		
Fall Site Prep Date (if applicable)		
Spring Site Prep Treatment		
Spring Planting Date		
Species #1 ²		
Planting Rate #1		
Species #2		
Planting Rate #2		
Species #3		
Planting Rate #3		
Species #4		
Planting Rate #4		
Lime per soil test (tons/acre) (if applicable)		
N, P, K per soil test (if applicable)		

¹ List the site establishment method to be used: **conventional, reduced tillage or no-till**. Refer to the methods outlined in this document

² List the species to be planted; or attach suitable mixture. Refer to CPS 327-Table7. Other mixtures may also be suitable. Use additional sheets or the "Additional Notes" section to document if required.

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If needed, an aerial view or a side view of the practice can be shown below. Other relevant information, complementary practices and measures, and additional specifications may be included.

Additional Notes and Operation and Maintenance:

Operation and Maintenance – Maintain as specified in the section of this job sheet entitled Operation and Maintenance. *Some activities, types and dates of maintenance may be prohibited by various USDA programs.*
Additional Requirements:

Certifications			
Job Sheet	Prepared by:	Title:	Date:
	Approved by:	Title:	Date:
Installation	Meets NRCS Standards and Specifications		
	Certification by:	Title:	Date:

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