

Participant Name _____

Farm # _____ Tract # _____ Contract # _____

***INFORMATION ON THIS JOB SHEET IS
CONSIDERED TO BE PART OF THE
CONTRACT AND/OR CONSERVATION
PLAN.***

Definition

This Forage Harvest Management job sheet will be used in the timely cutting and removal of forages from the field as hay, green-chop or ensilage as part of a conservation plan.

Purpose

This job sheet is designed to help you cut and remove forages from the field to be utilized later as stored forages in a way that optimizes yield and quality, promotes vigorous re-growth, maintains stand life, maintains desired species composition, removes excess soil nutrients, controls insects, diseases and weeds, maintains or improves wildlife habitat, or provides biomass for energy production. *Check the bullet preceding points as they are considered in development of your conservation plan.*

Preparing for Forage Harvest

- ◇ Prior to harvest, clear field of any debris that could damage machinery, or if ingested by livestock, lead to sickness or death.
- ◇ To control forage plant disease, insects, and/or movement of weed infestations, clean harvesting equipment after harvest and before storing.
- ◇ To reduce safety hazards, use caution when operating harvesting and hauling equipment on field slopes over 25 percent, particularly on cross-slope traffic patterns.
- ◇ When planning harvest time, consider that hay cut in the afternoon is slightly higher quality than forage cut in the morning.
- ◇ Set shear-plate on forage chopper to the proper cut for the crop being harvested. Keep knives well sharpened for best results.

Moisture Levels

- ◇ For optimal dry hay quality, rake hay at 30 to 40 percent moisture and ted or invert swaths when moisture is above 40 percent.
- ◇ Bale field cured hay at 15 to 20 percent moisture and bale force air-dried hay at 20 to 25 percent moisture levels.
- ◇ To check moisture with a moisture meter prior to rolling, stuff forage in a five-gallon bucket and insert probe in bucket for approximate reading. Test several locations for average reading.
- ◇ Do not allow lespedeza to over-cure. Rake prior to excessive drying to prevent significant loss of leaves.

Management

- ◇ Native grass should generally not be cut between September 1 and the first killing frost (approx. 24 degrees F) or November 1 whichever occurs first. For good quality, warm season grass hay, harvest hay before seed heads emerge (UK Publication AGR-145).
- ◇ Alfalfa should not be cut between September 15 and the first hard freeze (approx. 24 degrees F) or November 1 whichever occurs first. For high quality, alfalfa hay, harvest first cutting at “late bud to first flower;” and successive cuttings at “first flower to 1/10 bloom” (UK Publication AGR-76).
- ◇ If improving wildlife habitat is an objective, then appropriate harvest schedules, cover patterns, and plant height to provide suitable habitat for the desired species should be maintained. Forage should not be harvested during the primary nesting season, which is between May 15th and August 1st. Introduced grass cutting heights should be a minimum of 6 inches, and native grass cutting heights should be a minimum of 8 inches.
- ◇ If managing for wildlife is an objective, then consider utilizing a “flush bar” in front of harvest machinery that would harm wildlife, and consider cutting fields from inside to outside (in order to facilitate wildlife movement out of the harvest area).

Hay Storage

- ◇ Hay typically heats with variable temperature over a six-week period after baling. 120-140 degrees F. (SAFE). 140-160 degrees F. (CAUTION). 160+ degrees (CALL FIRE DEPT.)
- ◇ If hay is stored outside, place rolls in a north-south direction with rolls running up and down slope spaced three feet or more between lines of rolls.

Recommended Cutting Height and Time of Harvest

List fields in left column for forage harvest management.

FIELD NUMBERS	FORAGE PLANT SPECIES	TIME OF HARVEST	<u>MINIMUM CUTTING HEIGHT</u>
	Alfalfa	Late bud to first flower for first cutting; first flower to 1/10 bloom for second cutting and later cuttings.	3 inches
	Bluegrass, Tall fescue	Boot to early head stage for first cut, aftermath cuts at 4 to 6 week intervals.	2 inches
	Orchardgrass, Timothy	Boot to early head stage for first cut, aftermath cuts at 4 to 6 week intervals.	3 inches
	Red clover or Crimson clover	First flower to 1/10 bloom.	3 inches
	Oats, Barley, or Wheat	Boot to early head stage.	3 inches
	Rye or Triticale	Boot stage or before.	3 inches
	Annual Lespedeza	Early bloom and before bottom leaves begin to fall.	3 inches
	Ladino clover or White clover	Cut at correct stage and height for companion forage plant.	N/A
	Sudangrass, Sorghum hybrids, Pearl millet, or Johnsongrass	40 inch height or early boot stage, whichever comes first.	6 inches
	Bermudagrass	Cut when height is 15 to 18 inches.	2 inches
	Caucasian bluestem	Boot to early head stage.	4 inches
	Big bluestem, Indiangrass, or Switchgrass	Early head stage.	8 inches
	Eastern Gamagrass	Boot stage, or 40-45 days after green up 40-45 day cycle with 45 days rest before freeze	8 inches

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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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