



**Plant Enhancement Activity – PLT02 – Monitoring key grazing areas to improve grazing management**

**State Criteria (same as NATIONAL CRITERIA) with the following clarifications:**

Implementation of this enhancement **requires** monitoring key grazing areas to improve grazing management. A key grazing area is a small area of a pasture that is identified as being representative of the entire pasture. Complete the 6 steps listed below:

1. At least one key grazing area will be established for each pasture. The key grazing area locations will be identified on an aerial photo. Key forage plant(s) will be identified for each key grazing area.
2. Key grazing areas/monitoring sites will be monitored based on the frequency of grazing as outlined in the National Criteria Item 2.
  - a. The monitoring method(s) may be chosen from the methods listed on page 2 (Attachment A).
  - b. If measurement of key forage plant heights is the chosen monitoring method, see page 3 (Attachment B). Recommended residual forage heights for common range and pasture plants in Nebraska are based on NRCS Prescribed Grazing practice specifications.
3. Monitoring in each pasture will include landscape view photos taken at each key grazing area. Refer to: [http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-ECS-2\\_\(Instructions\).pdf](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-ECS-2_(Instructions).pdf).
4. A GPS point or fixed marker such as a disk blade or other permanent marker will be established in each pasture in order to return to the same monitoring site each year.
  - a. The [GrassSnap App](#) is a tool that may be used to facilitate monitoring. The App includes photo monitoring, rangeland apparent trend and other monitoring methods.
5. When measurement of key forage plant heights is selected as one of the monitoring methods (*National criteria 3b*), a grazing exclusion cage will be located at each key area. This provides a reference point to the current years' growth for that site. The cages will be moved each year after the end-of-year monitoring for the site has been completed.
6. A written documentation of how monitoring data was evaluated and utilized to adjust grazing management plans.

**Documentation Requirements (SEE NATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY JOBSHEET)**

**Additional State Documentation Requirements (attach or email information to NRCS):**

1. Aerial photo or map of each pasture with the key grazing area clearly identified.
2. Annual photograph landscape view of each pastures identified key grazing area (photo point).
3. Written documentation of the monitoring data collected, utilizing one or more of the methods listed Attachment A.
4. Written documentation of how monitoring data was evaluated and utilized to adjust grazing management plans.

**I certify that the following information meets specifications and the necessary documentation has been provided to NRCS:**

**Certified by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**ATTACHMENT A**

**a. Rangeland Apparent Trend**

i. See [Nebraska Prescribed Grazing Tool](#) for form and instructions.

**b. Rangeland Health Assessment (for rangeland)**

i. <http://www.blm.gov/nstc/library/pdf/1734-6.pdf>

ii. [http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-ECS-11\\_Range\\_Health\\_Evaluation\\_Worksheet.pdf](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-ECS-11_Range_Health_Evaluation_Worksheet.pdf)

**c. Pasture Condition Scoring (for pastureland)**

i. See [Nebraska Prescribed Grazing Tool](#) for form and instructions.

**d. Plant productivity determinations**

i. See [Nebraska Prescribed Grazing Tool](#) for form forage inventory options.

**e. Measurements of key forage plant heights (before and after grazing)**

i. **Suggested pre- and post grazing heights of common Nebraska range and for age grasses are listed on attachment B and are based on NRCS Prescribed Grazing practice specifications ([528s](#)).**

**ii. Example Data Collection Form For Key Forage Plant Heights Before and After Grazing**

Pasture	Key Forage Plant	Livestock In Date	Key Forage Plant Height Before	Livestock Out Date	Key Forage Plant Height After



ATTACHMENT B

<sup>1/</sup> **Table 3. Recommendations for Beginning and Ending Grazing (Heights and Dates) for Nebraska Pastures**

Species	Begin Grazing		End Grazing	
	<sup>2/</sup> Minimum Height of Vegetative Growth (inches)	Approximate Date*	<sup>2/</sup> Minimum Residual Height (inches)	<sup>2/</sup> Minimum Residual Height Before Killing Frost (inches)
Alfalfa, Alsike & red clover	6	May 15	3	6
Big & Sand bluestem	10	June 1	6	10
Birdsfoot trefoil	6	June 1	3	6
Cicer milkvetch	8	May 20	5	8
Creeping foxtail	6	May 1	3	6
Crested wheatgrass	4	April 20	3	6
Eastern gamagrass	18-20	June 1	8	10
Indiangrass	10	June 1	4	10
Intermediate wheatgrass	6	May 1	5	8
Meadow brome	6	May 1	5	6
Orchardgrass	6	May 1	5	8
Pubescent wheatgrass	6	May 1	5	6
Reed canarygrass	8	May 1	4	8
Russian wildrye	6	May 1	3	4
Smooth brome	6	May 1	4	7
Switchgrass	10	June 1	6	10
Tall fescue	6	May 1	3	6
Tall wheatgrass	7	May 1	4	8
Timothy	6	June 1	4	5
Western wheatgrass	6	May 1	3	6

<sup>1/</sup> Height is the average height when **leaves** are lifted in a vertical position. <sup>2/</sup> In Vegetative Zone I, the Panhandle of Nebraska, all heights listed in Table 3 should be adjusted downward by 25% for all species.

**References**

National Drought Mitigation Center. University of Nebraska Lincoln. [Rangeland Monitoring Methods](#). Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch.

[Monitoring Manual for Grassland, Shrubland and Savanna Ecosystems](#), Volume 1: Quick Start. By Jeffrey E. Herrick, et.al., USDA – ARS Jornada Experimental Range., Las Cruces, New Mexico