

# Instructions

## Degree of Use Worksheet for Pastures **NE-ECS-14**

### Instructions for use of NE-ECS-14

On pastureland, planned target residual heights for key forage species will be documented on [Degree of Use Worksheet for Pasture, \(NE-ECS-14\)](#).

See NE Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, 528 - Prescribed Grazing Design Procedures, Table 4, listed below. Table 4. Lists the recommended beginning graze and residual forage heights for common pasture species in Nebraska.

**Table 4. Recommendations for Beginning and Ending Grazing for Nebraska Pastures\***

Species	Begin Grazing		End Grazing	
	Minimum Height of Vegetative Growth (inches)	Approximate Date*	Minimum Residual Height (inches)	Minimum Residual Height Before Killing Frost (inches)
Alfalfa	6	May 15	2	6
Alsike and red clover	6	May 15	2	6
Biennial sweetclover	6	May 1	2	6
Big & Sand bluestem	10	June 1	6	8
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	2	4
Eastern Gamagrass	18-20	June 1	10	10
Indiangrass	10	June 1	4	8
Intermediate wheatgrass	6	May 1	5	6
Kentucky bluegrass	4	May 1	2	3
Meadow brome	6	May 1	5	6
Orchardgrass	6	May 1	5	6
Pubescent wheatgrass	6	May 1	5	6
Reed canarygrass	8	May 1	4	8
Russian wildrye	6	May 1	2	4
Smooth brome	6	May 1	4	6
Switchgrass	10	June 1	6	8
Tall fescue	6	May 1	3	6
Tall wheatgrass	7	May 1	4	6
Timothy	6	June 1	4	5
Western wheatgrass	6	May 1	3	4

*\*Grass and legume mixtures should be grazed in a manner that favors the dominant or desired species. Height is the average height when **leaves** are lifted in a vertical position.*

Final degree-of-use and residual forage height determinations should generally be made at or near the end of the growing season. However, reviewing utilization levels after each grazing event permits the land manager to make adjustments to the grazing plan in order to better achieve the desired objectives. At a minimum, use levels will be documented at key grazing areas during an annual follow-up review. See the [National Range and Pasture Handbook, Chapter 5](#) for additional guidance on selecting key plant species, key grazing areas, and degree of use determinations.

The use of grazing enclosures or utilization cages can be a useful aide in estimating utilization and production. The forage protected by the cage or enclosure allows the land manager to make comparisons of the proportion of herbage consumed by animals, (including wildlife and insects), to that produced in the current year. Ideally, utilization cages should not disrupt normal vegetative growth and should be moved every year at the beginning of a grazing period. See [Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements, Interagency Technical Reference, 1996](#) for more information about utilization cages and design.

If actual utilization levels exceed those identified in the plan or residual forage heights are lower than planned to meet the resource objectives, the reason should be documented (e.g. drought, too much time spent in a pasture, too many animals, or combination of factors) in the notes section of [Proper Grazing Use Worksheet, \(NE-ECS-414\)](#) or [Degree of Use Worksheet for Pasture, \(NE-ECS-14\)](#). As needed, the prescribed grazing schedule and/or the livestock/forage balance will be re-planned for the following year, incorporating necessary changes so that utilization levels are achieved that will enable the resources objectives to be met.

## Support References

Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), Section IV, Conservation Practice Standard – Prescribed Grazing, 528  
<http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE528.pdf>

Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), Section IV, Conservation Practice Standard – Design Procedures Prescribed Grazing, 528DP  
<http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE528DP.pdf>

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