

FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service - practice code 511



FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

The cutting and removal of forages from the field as hay, greenchop, or ensilage.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

This practice applies to all land uses where machine harvested forage crops are grown. It is designed to help the farmer or rancher optimize the economic yield of forage at the desired quality and quantity. In addition, the practice provides the following functions:

1. Promote vigorous plant growth for improved ground cover and protection from erosion
2. Soil improvement provided by healthy vigorous plants that increase soil organic matter, root channels, water holding capacity, earth worms, etc
3. Maintain stand life for the desired time period
4. Maintain desired species composition

5. Use forage plants as a nutrient uptake tool to utilize or reduce excess plant nutrients available in the soil

6. Provide food and cover for wildlife

The following management concepts are considered in the specifications of this practice:

1. Stage of maturity and harvest interval
2. Moisture content for cutting silage/haylage as well as baling as hay
3. Length of cut for silage/haylage
4. Stubble height maintained for plant health and vigor
5. Management considerations that help improve wildlife food and cover
6. Additional considerations needed to help control disease, insects, and weed infestations

Additional information including standards and specifications are on file in the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.