



FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT (511)

FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

Forage harvest management includes timely cutting and removal of forages and biomass from the field as hay, green chop, or ensilage.



PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

- » To obtain the quantity and quality of forage to meet the objectives of the producer and the nutritional needs of the animals.
- » To control insects, diseases, and weeds.
- » To manage for the desired species composition to promote vigorous plant re-growth.
- » To maintain or improve wildlife habitat.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all land uses where machine harvested forage crops are grown.

PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Forage will be harvested at a frequency and height that will maintain a desired healthy plant community. This will be at the state of maturity that provides the desired quality and quantity.

When managing forage stands for multiple use objectives that include wildlife considerations and use as livestock feed, harvesting at a later stage of maturity is acceptable.

Delay harvest if prolonged or heavy precipitation is forecast that would seriously damage cut forage.

Harvest silage/haylage crops at the ideal moisture range for the type of storage structure(s) being utilized.

A critical component for any silage system is to ensure air tight forage containment.

For optimal dry hay quality, rake hay at 30 to 40 percent moisture and invert swaths when moisture is above 40 percent. Bale at optimum moisture levels:

Approximate percent moisture should be:

- » Bale field cut cured hay at 15 to 20 percent moisture.
- » Bale forced air-dried hay at 20 to 35 percent moisture.
- » Bale balage at 50-70% moisture.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each field or group of fields and the following design criteria shall be recorded:

Plans and specifications must include as a minimum for the forage harvest operations:

1. Goals, objectives, specific purpose (such as high forage quantity and quality or nutrient uptake, etc.).
2. Forage species to be harvested.

For each dominant forage species harvested, document the following requirements:

3. Method of harvest.
4. Stage of maturity.
5. Optimal harvest moisture content.
6. Length of cut.
7. Stubble height to be left.
8. Harvest interval including late harvest, if applicable.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Before forage harvest clear fields of debris that could damage machinery or be ingested by livestock, which could lead to sickness or death.

Operate all forage harvesting equipment at the optimum settings and speeds to minimize loss of leaves.

Keep forage chopper knives well sharpened. Do not use re-cutters or screens unless forage moisture levels fall below recommended levels for optimum chopping action.

Regardless of silage/haylage storage method, ensure good compaction and an airtight seal to exclude oxygen and mold formation.

Dispose of the plastic wrap or bags used to store forage in an environmentally sound manner.

511 FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTATION WORKSHEET

Client's Name: _____ Farm Number(s): _____

Tract Number (s): _____

Practice Purpose:

- Optimize yield and quality of forage at the desired levels,
- Promote vigorous plant re-growth,
- Manage for the desired species composition,
- Use forage plant biomass as a soil nutrient uptake tool,
- Control insects, diseases and weeds,
- Maintain and/or improve wildlife habitat.

Harvest

Field	First Cutting (Month)	Subsequent Cutting(s) Month	Cutting Height (inches)	Moisture Content for cutting and baling

Fertilizer Recommendation

Field	Acres	Species	P	K	Month to apply

Additional specifications and notes:

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COST SHARE DOCUMENTATION FOR CASE FILE

Before payment is made, the following information is required to be in the case file:

- Plan or location map, or photograph of the field and documentation of practice layout according to plans and specifications is present in the client case file and include the following:
- Photographs of the installed practice that include:
 - » Date photo was taken in the field.
 - » Statement of what the photo represents, when clarification is required.
- Field verification is documented and a certified planner verified “as installed” this practice meets NRCS standards and specifications.
 - » Planned animal units per systems: _____
 - » Applied animal units per systems: _____

Practice Certification (NRCS USE ONLY)

I certify that the practice as installed is complete and meets the applicable Wisconsin NRCS Conservation Practice Standard and all applicable practice specifications. Any changes to the original practice design have been approved and are documented on the original practice design “as installed.”

Certified Planner (print)

Certified Planner (sign)

Date

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Client Name: _____

Planner Name: _____

Practice Purpose: _____

PLANNED PRACTICE LOCATION AND EXTENT

Contract Number	Contract Identification Number (CIN)	Tract Number	Field Number(s)	Systems/AUs Contracted	Systems/AUs Planned	Actual Systems/AUs Applied (NRCS USE ONLY)

**A completed copy of this page must be submitted for a financial assistance payment to be processed.*

Notes: