United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service 2012 Ranking Period 1

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM09 – Grazing management to improve wildlife habitat

Enhancement Description
Implement a grazing management plan that will allow for rest periods to provide adequate residue for nesting and fawning cover and increase diversity of vegetation structure to benefit a variety of wildlife species.

Land Use Applicability
Pastureland, Rangeland, Forestland

Benefits
Wildlife habitat can be greatly improved through proper grazing management. Proper grazing management is essential to healthy wildlife populations because plants supply many species of birds and animals with food and cover for nesting, fawning, loafing, roosting, travel and escape from predators and adverse weather. These include song birds, quail, turkey, pheasants, deer, and rabbits to name just a few. Some species of ground nesting grassland birds are in decline and others have become uncommon. Healthy stands of forage can be managed to provide habitat for a wide array of wildlife.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement applies to all pasture (including silvopasture), range or forest land use acres.

Criteria

1. Defer 33% of the grazing land on the land use from grazing during the nesting/fawning season each year.
2. Develop and implement a written grazing management plan that identifies the following:
   a. wildlife management objectives for grazing land,
   b. targeted wildlife species,
   c. nesting or fawning dates,
   d. the location and number of acres to be deferred each year,
   e. a schedule for the year of deferment, and
   f. stocking rates that will allow proper forage utilization while maintaining proper plant heights that provide food and shelter for wildlife and maintain plant health.

Additional criteria for silvopasture

1. Inventory the habitat condition of the silvopasture, the farm, and adjoining farms to determine habitat needs for the targeted wildlife.
2. Use one or more of the following methods to improve habitat for the targeted species.

a. Establish additional understory vegetation (e.g., native grass, forbs and shrubs) that will improve habitat conditions for the targeted species.
b. Establish clusters of other tree species if needed as a food source (e.g., oaks for mast).
c. Manage tree canopy to achieve the desired understory plant community.
d. Leave some dead or dying trees as snags if cavity nesting wildlife is targeted.
e. Remove trees or invasive plants that do not provide the desired habitat.
f. Replace removed trees by planting new trees or shrubs that will provide the desired habitat.
g. Thin less desirable trees to encourage the growth of trees that will provide the desired wildlife habitat.

Adoption Requirements
This enhancement is considered adopted when a grazing management plan targeting selected wildlife species has been written and one-third of the grazing land is avoided during the nesting/fawning season each year as prescribed.

Documentation Requirements
1. A schedule of when grazing activities occurred documenting that grazing activities were deferred on a minimum of 33% of the available acreage.
2. A map showing the acreage where these activities are applied.

North Dakota Requirements
Deferment of grazing shall occur within the timeframe of May 15 to July 15. The grazing plan must meet NRCS Field Office Technical Guide standards and specifications for 528-Prescribed Grazing. The same area cannot be deferred in consecutive years.