

# Manage Legumes in Pastures

## Conservation Activity Job Sheet

(NJGrazing02)

Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Crop Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Manage pasture systems so that clover and other legumes are maintained in the pastures without tillage.**

Most legumes do not persist under continuous grazing. Pastures must be grazed rotationally, allowing an adequate rest period, so that the forage can replenish the energy reserves in the root system. Properly rotated and treated pastures will maintain a percent legume cover without re-seeding.

### Rest Periods for Grass/Clover Pastures

Suggested rest periods are as follows: (circle the period used)

Season	Weather Conditions	Growth Rate	Rest Period
Spring	Cool, moist	Fast	10-14 days
Spring	Warm, dry	Medium	14-20 days
Summer	Hot, moist	Slow	30-35 days
Summer	Hot, dry	Very slow	40-60 days
Fall	Cool	Medium	14-20 days

Animals should start grazing when forages are:

Alfalfa	4-7 inches
Birdsfoot Trefoil	6-8 inches
Red & Ladino Clover	4-6 inches
White Clover	3 inches

Animals should be removed when forages reach:

Alfalfa	2-3 inches
Birdsfoot Trefoil	3 inches
Red & Ladino Clover	2-3 inches
White Clover	0.5-1 inches

Completion of this activity requires that soils be tested for pH on all pastures at least once every 3 years. Initial efforts need to be on regulating pH to between 6.0 and 7.0. Only when pH is at this ideal level should nutrient levels be addressed. The goal would be to maintain optimum levels for the mixed pasture. Incorporating and maintaining legumes in the pasture will, over time, reduce fertilizer costs, especially for nitrogen.

Using the 2000 Penn State Agronomy Guide, recommended pasture fertilization is as follows:

- If legumes (such as alfalfa, clover, and vetch) constitute greater than 30% of the pasture, then fertilizing with nitrogen is not recommended. The legume contributes adequate nitrogen through nitrogen fixation. Fertilize these pastures annually with phosphorus and potassium.
- If legumes exceed 40% of the entire forage mix, caution should be taken to control bloat and other gastro-intestinal disorders in grazing livestock.

Documentation Required: Copies of the annual *Pasture Condition Score Sheet* showing the % legume.

I certify that I maintained legumes in my pastures (between 20% and 40% of the total forage) in order to reduce fertilizer requirements on my farm.

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Signature

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Date