United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2011 Ranking Period 1

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM10 – Harvest hay in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape

Enhancement Description
Harvesting hay using conservation measures that allow wildlife to flush and escape. These measures include timing of haying to avoid periods when upland wildlife are nesting or fawning, idling paddocks or pastures and idling hay land during the nesting or fawning period, leaving a residual forage height conducive to wildlife nesting and fawning for the following year, and applying haying techniques that reduce mortality to wildlife.

Land Use Applicability
Cropland (hayland)

Benefits
Many species of birds and animals use pastures and hay lands as cover, to find food, nesting areas, and rearing their young. These include song birds, quail, turkey, pheasants, deer, and rabbits to name just a few. Some species of ground nesting birds are in decline and others have become uncommon. Managing haying techniques can be beneficial to the survival of ground nesting birds and other wildlife species. Altering harvesting routes can provide escape routes for hens, hens with broods and hiding fawns. Delaying harvests or leaving portions of a field un-harvested provide nesting habitat.

Criteria
Use one of the following techniques (A or B) to protect wildlife during haying activities.

A. Defer haying. The producer *will apply and maintain at least two of the following* management actions specifically for improving or protecting grassland functions for the state identified targeted wildlife species.

1. Do not cut hay on at least 1/3 of the hay acres each year. Idle strips or blocks must be at least 30 feet wide.
2. Cutting haying is allowed on all acres each year, however for at least 1/3 of the hay acreage, hay cutting must be either before and/or after the primary nesting or fawning seasons based on state established dates for the targeted species.
3. Increase forage heights after mowing to state specified minimum heights for the targeted species on all hayed acres.

B. For all haying that will be conducted during the nesting/fawning season the producer will implement *at least two of the following* to flush wildlife from hay fields during the mowing operation:

1. A flush bar attachment will be required on the mower
2. All mowing will be done during daylight hours
3. Haying pattern will be either:
    a. Begin on one end of the field and work back and forth across the field, or
    b. Begin in the center of the field and work outward

Documentation Requirements

1. Map showing the fields that were treated
2. Option A – A picture showing residual heights of hay after mowing
3. Option B – A picture showing the flush bar attachment on tractor

Michigan Supplement

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM10 – Harvest Hay in a Manner That Allows Wildlife to Flush and Escape

Wildlife-Friendly Hay Harvesting Strategies

Mowing can destroy nests, eggs, adult birds, and fawns. Ground-nesting females that are incubating eggs are extremely reluctant to leave their nests.

State Criteria

Michigan primary bird nesting dates and cervid fawning dates: April 15 – August 1.

Option A

Raise the cutter bar a minimum of 3 inches above the regular setting to leave stubble for wildlife cover.