

Field Borders

Iowa Job Sheet



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Des Moines, Iowa

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What is a field border?

A field border is a band or strip of perennial vegetation established at the edge or around the perimeter of a field. Used with contour or cross slope farming patterns, it eliminates planting end rows up and down hill and provides turning area for farm equipment.

How it helps the land

Filed borders control sheet, rill, gully and wind erosion at the edges of a field where end rows would run up and down hill. Field borders also provide wildlife food and cover, protect soil and water quality and help in managing pest populations.

Where the practice applies

Field borders should be used on any cropland field where wind, sheet, rill and gully erosion exceed tolerable limits on end row areas. It can be used to support or connect other buffer practices within and between fields.

Where to get help

For assistance in planning and establishing field borders on your farm contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more job sheets and conservation information visit the NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.



Helping People Help the Land
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

Requirements of field borders

Field borders are required as shown on your conservation plan map. Approximately _____ feet of field border at _____ width will be established. Following are the recommended seeding and fertilizer rates for your field borders.

Recommended seeding for your field borders

| species | lbs/ac |
|---------|--------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Recommended fertilizer (lbs/ac)

| N | P | K | Lime |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Applying the practice

This practice will be considered to be applied when the permanent vegetation recommended above is established in strips wide enough to turn farm equipment without the use of end rows. Field borders must be a minimum of 30 feet wide but must be wide enough to allow you to turn our farm equipment. Normally this is twice the width of the equipment used. When establishing field borders follow the Critical Are Planting (342) standard:

- Prepare a firm seedbed.
- Apply lime and fertilizer before seeding according to soil tests.
- Drill grass and legume seed uniformly over the strip 1/4" to 1/2" deep or broadcast uniformly over the field border. Harrow and cultipack to establish good seed to soil contact.

- Seed the area with the recommended seeding mixture
- Oats may be seeded as a companion crop at the rate of 1 to 1 1/2 bushels per acre during the spring. Mow oats before they head out or harvest for grain if allowed
- Drill across the slope, not up and down, if possible to help control erosion.
- Seeding may be completed during the spring seeding period, March 1 to May 15 or during the late summer seeding period, August 1 to September 15. The seeding period for warm season grasses is April 1 to July 1. Refer to your plan schedule for your planned planting dates.

Maintaining the practice

- Protect from livestock during nesting season to maximize wildlife benefits.
- Establish stiff-stemmed, upright grasses, grass/legume or forbs to trap wind or water-borne particles.
- Mow to control weeds or shrub development. Delay mowing until August 1 to avoid harming nesting birds.
- Maintain desired vegetation and plant vigor by liming, fertilizing, mowing, disking, burning, and controlling noxious weeds to ensure effectiveness of the border.
- Reseed as necessary to maintain desired plant species.
- On adjacent sloping cropland, till soil on the contour, at right angles to the field border. This prevents water from forming gullies along the

edge of field borders.

- Shut off farm chemical sprayers when turning on a field border, and insist custom chemical applicators do the same.
- Shape and reseed border areas damaged by storms, animals, chemicals, tillage or equipment traffic.
- Remove sediment from above or within the field border when accumulated sediment either alters the function of the field border or threatens the degradation of the plant species.

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