

Instructions -- RANGELAND UTILIZATION ESTIMATE--KEY FORAGE PLANT METHOD

The Utilization Estimate will give you a quick look at how your most important plants in each grazing unit were used, season of grazing use, and relative amount of soil moisture or plant growth for the year.

At the top of the form enter the **CLIENT, ECOLOGICAL SITE & SIMILARITY INDEX, TRANSECT LOCATION, MANAGEMENT UNIT, RESPONSE UNIT, and EXAMINER**. For **SEASON OF USE**: circle the season (or seasons) that grazing occurred. To the right, enter the **DATE** the utilization estimate was conducted. Circle the appropriate amount of **SOIL MOISTURE OR PLANT GROWTH** apparent during the grazing season. To the right, enter the **KEY SPECIES** to be evaluated for each key species.

CHECKING UTILIZATION:

Check utilization just after the last grazing event in the pasture. Begin by selecting a key area. A good key area is one that does not get too much or too little grazing pressure. Stay at least $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away from water and supplement locations, gates, trails, and other areas of more frequent use. Avoid inaccessible areas or areas of little or no use also. Pick a spot you can come back to each time you check utilization.

It will be very helpful to develop a photo point at the key site. Drive a metal post so you can go back to the same spot. Take pictures of the pasture at the four compass points (north, east, south, and west) and one at the ground at the post. The photographic information will be valuable in comparing pastures, annual growth, and variations in utilization.

Begin a step transect by walking in one direction from the post. Take two steps; at the second step, stop, and estimate which Use-Class is apparent for the key species nearest your foot. Enter a check or mark in the **TALLY (checks or marks)** blank on the form in the row that represents the **USE-CLASS** of the plant (see descriptions below). Continue walking and entering the Use-Class of key species at each second step until you have at least 100 points. Unless utilization is extremely even you will have checks or marks in several rows of the form.

When the step transect is completed, calculate utilization by adding the checks or marks for each Use-Class and enter the result in the **GRAZED PLANTS** column **(b)**. Multiply the **MIDPOINT** numbers **(a)** by the **GRAZED PLANTS** number **(b)** and enter in the **CURRENT USE** column. Total both the grazed plants and current use columns and enter the result in the blocks marked **(c)** and **(d)**. The estimated percent utilization of the key species is obtained by dividing the number in **(d)** by the number in **(c)**. Enter this number in the lower right block on the form.

In the Remarks section, it is important to note if grazing or browsing by wildlife species is apparent. If so, include the kind of wildlife responsible for the grazing/browsing, if known.

USE-CLASSES: Use one of the five **USE-CLASSES** described below. Degree of use refers to the amount of annual, above ground forage removed by grazing animals.

1. **SLIGHT:** 0–20% degree of use. Very little or no use of key forage plants. Only choice areas and choice forage grazed.
2. **LIGHT:** 21–40% degree of use. Key forage plants lightly to moderately used. Practically no use of low value forage plants. Most of accessible range shows grazing. Very little trailing to grazing.
3. **MODERATE:** 41–55% degree of use. Key forage plants used about right for the season of grazing and range sites involved. Some use of low-value forage plants. All fully accessible areas are grazed; some trampling damage may be evident.
4. **HEAVY:** 56–75% degree of use. Key forage plants closely cropped. Low-value forage plants generally being grazed. Trampling damage is widespread in accessible areas.
5. **SEVERE:** 76–100% degree of use. Key forage plants grubbed and weakened from continual grazing of regrowth. Low-value forage plants carrying the grazing load and closely cropped.