



PLT16 - Montana Supplement

Intensive Management of Rotational Grazing – (Plant Enhancement Activity)

Montana Clarification

Enhancement Description: in addition to the information described in this section of the National Enhancement this enhancement would minimize grazing of re-growth, increase the capability to change season of use and increase recovery periods for key forage plants.

Operation and Maintenance

Operation: Clarification of National Enhancement: Planned grazing use should not exceed **50%** of annual production for preferred and desirable forage species during the grazing season (generally April through September in most parts of Montana).

Montana Specifications

This enhancement will require an approved prescribed grazing **plan that follows the NRCS 528 Prescribed Grazing Standard and Specifications.**

Table 1. Optimum grazing periods for tame grass and legume varieties, their re-growth ability, and recommended stubble height (inches) after grazing.

Grass Variety	Re-growth ability	Optimum Timing of Use	Stubble
Kentucky bluegrass	High	Spring, Fall	2
Meadow brome	High	Spring, Summer, Fall	4
Smooth brome	Medium	Spring, Summer, Winter	4
Tall fescue	Medium	Spring, Fall, Winter	4
Creeping and meadow foxtail	High	Spring, Summer	4
Orchardgrass	High	Spring, Summer, Fall	4
Timothy	Medium	Spring, Summer	4
Crested and Siberian wheatgrass	Low - Medium	Spring, Fall	3
Intermediate wheatgrass	Medium	Spring, Summer, Fall	6
Pubescent wheatgrass	Medium	Spring, Summer, Fall	6
Tall wheatgrass	Medium	Summer	6

Altai wildrye	Medium - High	Spring, Summer, Fall Winter	6
Russian wildrye	Medium - High	Summer, Fall, Winter	3
Reed Canarygrass	High	Spring, Summer	4
Alfalfa	High	Summer	2
Clover, white and red	High	Spring	2
Cicer milkvetch	High	Summer, Fall	2
Sainfoin	Medium	Spring, Summer	8
Sweetclover	High	Summer	12
Birdsfoot trefoil	High	Summer	4

PASTURELAND

Following routine winter feeding, grazing of pasture forage plants will not be allowed until forage plants grow to at least the four-leaf growth stage. Pastures may be grazed earlier in the spring before the four-leaf growth stage has been achieved only if an adequate rest period is allowed for plant re-growth during the peak-growing season (prior to June 15). Residual grazing heights for pasture species under continuous stocking and rotational grazing are listed in Forage Harvest Management (Code 511) specification, TABLE 1. These heights are suggested to allow for plant growth and recovery following grazing. Refer to *Montana Interagency Plant Materials Handbook* for management information on individual forage species.

The planned grazing system for the pasture units must identify key species and balance forage supply with animal demand. Pasture condition and yield information will be used to determine appropriate stocking rates. Refer to *MT-NRCS Pasture Inventory Worksheet (MT-ECS-116)*. See additional specifications for planned grazing systems under Rangelands in the **Montana NRCS 528 specifications**. Occasionally pasture plants may become over-mature and livestock will reject them. In this instance mowing is desirable to maintain high quality pasture. Mowing pastures should be done only if there is a need to remove undesirable or stagnant vegetation.

Pastures must maintain an appropriate amount and balance of nutrients to be productive. Fertilizer programs will consider the maintenance requirements of the plant species, desired production levels, and soil textures. Soil tests are required prior to the application of fertilizer. Nitrogen fertilizers are used to increase grass production and split applications of nitrogen may be more effective than a single application. Phosphate applications will favor an increase of legumes in the stand. Legumes that are properly inoculated with the appropriate rhizobium will not respond to nitrogen fertilizer and may have soil test results that indicate no nitrogen fertilizer is necessary. Legumes that have not been properly inoculated will respond to nitrogen fertilization. Sulphur and other trace nutrients may be needed.

With rotational stocking methods the need to spread manure should be minimal. There may be areas of manure accumulation where continuous stocking occurs that will need to be dragged to redistribute nutrients back to the pasture.

The maintenance of vigorous stands of forage plants and an adequate fertilizer program will help control weedy plants. If new populations of weeds appear in a pasture, it may be a sign of improper grazing management. Grazing periods can be adjusted to target harvesting of undesirable plants. A combination of control methods should be initiated if weeds become a problem.

Reseeding should be the last step in making a pasture become more productive. In many cases, controlling the management of grazing animals by implementing a grazing plan, followed by correcting deficiencies in soil fertility, will be adequate to bring a pasture back to an acceptable level of productivity. Pasture reseeding should only be considered after these factors have been evaluated.

On irrigated pastures, the type and scheduling of irrigation must be considered when designing the grazing plan. Ideally, pastures should reach field capacity following irrigation before livestock are allowed to graze.

Incompatible Enhancements

Some enhancements are not compatible with other enhancements. If you have a question, contact your local NRCS office.

Eligible Land

Pastureland, Rangeland, or grazed forestland

Applicable Amount

Acres of pasture, rangeland, or grazed forestland

Documentation Requirements

1. **A written grazing plan which meets the NRCS 528 Prescribed Standard and Specifications** and all supporting documentation that is required to meet this Standard and Specifications.
2. A map showing the location of each key grazing area
3. Photographs from the photo point locations
4. Written documentation of the monitoring data collected
5. Written documentation of how monitoring data was used to adjust grazing management plans including modifications and objectives
6. Utilization records and documentation taken from the pastures that are enrolled to monitor use levels and stubble height remaining of key forage plants.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand all that is required for the implementation of this CSP Enhancement Activity.

Contract participant

Date