

## ANM10 - Guidance for harvesting hay in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape

### Criteria

New Mexico Primary Nesting/Fawning Season: April 15<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>.

*In general, wildlife start to utilize hayland for nesting or rearing young in early April and, depending on seasonal weather and temperature conditions, can continue through August.*

New Mexico Specified Minimum Height for Targeted Wildlife Species: The minimum cutting height is 5 inches above ground for ground nesting songbirds and small mammals.

### General Information on the Offered Techniques

- If it's anticipated that hay quality will be poor if harvested as late as July 15; early-season rotational grazing can delay forage maturity so that acceptable quality hay can be harvested.
- Aim high. Set your mower as high as possible to avoid ground-dwelling wildlife. Raising a mower as little as 5 inches off ground level using wear-plate spacers or slides can save small mammals and birds.
- Mow inside-out. Cut hay starting in the middle of the field and mow towards the outer borders, thereby allowing wildlife to stay in existing cover during the haying operation period. Fewer wildlife will be killed by tractor wheels or cutter blades, since they will not become trapped inside an ever-decreasing circle. This method also decreases predation by predators who make an easy meal of a young wildlife trying to cross open ground.
- Using wildlife flushing bars. Flushing bars can be mounted on the front of a tractor to move wildlife from the path of dangerous wheels and cutters. Numerous designs are available, in general: flushing bars are mounted offset on the front of the tractor, at least 10 feet in length, with hanging one inch chain about 2 feet apart. The hanging chains should be long enough to ride just above the surface of the ground. A 6-inch piece of chain (or horse bells) can be attached 6 inches above the bottom of the hanging chain to increase weight and noise. The first chain should be located 36 inches from the tractor frame. See Figure 2.

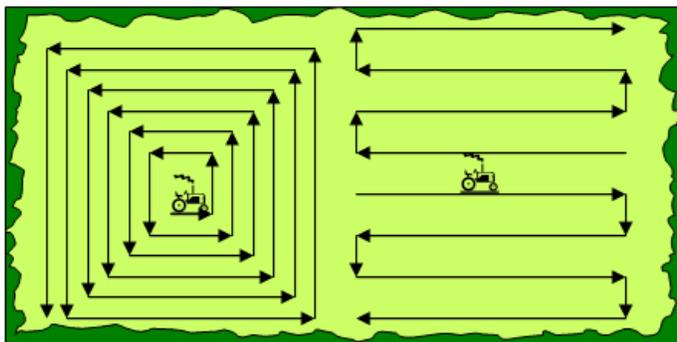
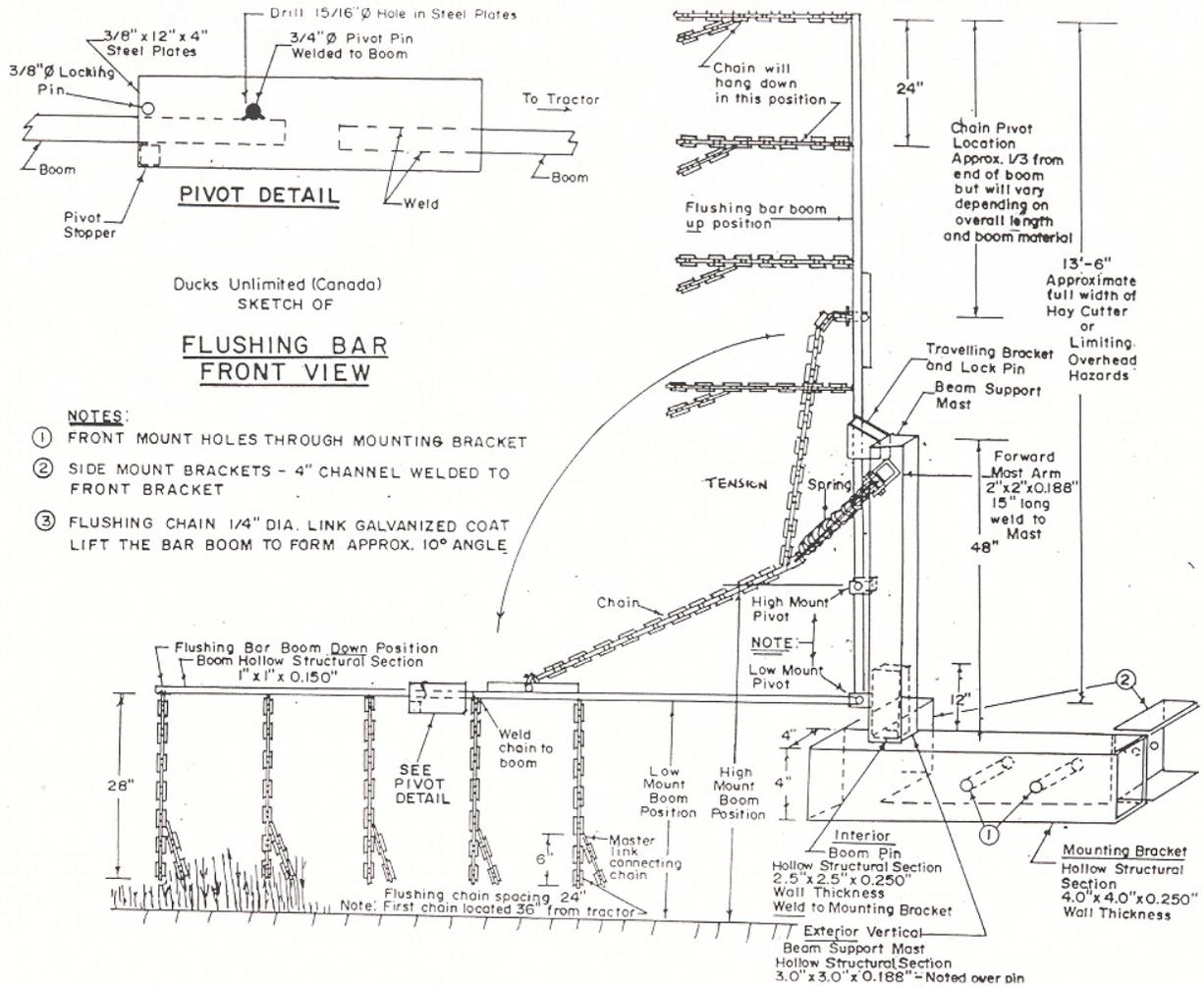


Figure 1. When mowing grasslands start cutting from the middle and work outward.



Figure 2. Optional design for a flushing bar, provided by Canada Ducks Unlimited.



### Optional Considerations:

- Leave uncut field borders for wildlife cover. Leave uncut a 10-foot or wider strip of hay around the outside of a field to provide food as well as nesting, escape and brood cover for wildlife. Predators can find nests easier in narrow border strips than in wider borders. Irregularly-shaped field borders provide even more cover for wildlife. Border width can vary, but a minimum width of 10 feet is desirable. This amounts to a little over an acre of hay for wildlife in a field having a 10-foot-wide strip that is a mile in length.
- Birds sitting on nests and young wildlife often do not have time to react to and avoid high-speed harvesters. Consider driving at reduced speeds in areas where wildlife have been observed or are suspected of nesting/brood rearing activity.
- If there are several fields to harvest, save the fields closest to wetlands and CRP acreage for last. These fields will likely have a high wildlife density, and a few additional days may make a considerable difference in reducing mortality.



