

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Key Practices for Grazing Land Operations

Since 1996, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has helped farmers address resource concerns on private land. EQIP, NRCS' principal program for delivering conservation technical and financial assistance to those who need it most, supports the needs of all agricultural operations, offering ideas, science-based solutions, and guidance for successful and sustainable conservation farms. Just select and install any of the practices described below--and many others--once you develop a conservation plan designed to address your specific resource concerns. EQIP solves problems for farmers.



Fence (Conservation Practice Standard 382)

Fence is a practice that may be applied on any area where farmers need better control of animals or people. Fences are typically used to facilitate better management. Considerations include:

1. Livestock management, such as handling, location, adequate watering and feeding facilities,
2. Soil erosion potential when constructing a fence on steep slopes,
3. Improved forage quantity and quality to meet livestock demand, and
4. Wildlife movement needs.



Livestock Pipeline (Conservation Practice Standard 516)

Pipelines are used to deliver water from a source of supply to points of use for livestock or wildlife. Pipelines can be essential for a successful prescribed grazing plan. For livestock water, the installation should have a capacity to provide seasonal high daily water requirements of 30 gallons per day per Animal Unit (Animal Unit = 1000 pounds live weight) for the number and species of animals onsite.



Prescribed Grazing (Conservation Practice Standard 528)

Prescribed Grazing is applied as part of a conservation system designed to accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

1. Improve or maintain health and vigor of key species and maintain a stable and desired plant community,
2. Provide or maintain food, cover, and shelter for animals of concern,
3. Maintain or improve water quality and quantity, and
4. Reduce soil erosion and improve soil condition for resource sustainability.



Stream Crossing (Conservation Practice Standard 578)

The stream crossing consists of a stabilized area or structure constructed across a stream to provide a travel way for people, livestock, equipment, or vehicles. This practice can:

1. Improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrient, stream loading,
2. Reduce streambank and streambed erosion, and
3. Provide a crossing for access to other grazed lands.



Forage and Biomass Planting (Conservation Practice Standard 512)

These plantings establish adapted and compatible species, varieties, or cultivars of herbaceous species suitable for pasture, hay or biomass production. Key decisions include seed preparation, seed and species selection, grazing requirements and biomass harvest frequency. When properly established, this practice can:

1. Improve or maintain livestock nutrition and health,
2. Provide or increase forage supply during periods of low forage production,
3. Reduce soil erosion,
4. Improve soil and water quality, and
5. Provide feedstock for biofuel or energy production.



Heavy Use Area Protection (Conservation Practice Standard 561)

The Heavy Use Area Protection practice stabilizes areas frequently and intensively used by livestock that require treatment to address resource concerns. Roofed livestock winter feeding stations provide a place for animals to feed during bad weather. Other heavy use areas (typically around troughs or as pads for feeding areas) are protected with vegetative cover or hard surface materials such as aggregate or concrete. This practice can:

1. Reduce soil erosion,
2. Improve water quantity and quality,
3. Improve air quality and aesthetics, and
4. Improve livestock health.



Watering Facility (Conservation Practice Standard 614)

A Watering Facility (tank, trough, or other watertight container) provides access to water for livestock and/or wildlife at selected locations. Watering facilities are particularly suited to facilitating a prescribed grazing plan. This facility can:

1. Protect and enhance vegetative cover through proper distribution of grazing,
2. Control erosion through better grassland management, and
3. Protect streams and ponds from livestock contamination.



Access Road (Conservation Practice Standard 650)

An Access Road is a travel-way for equipment and vehicles. When constructed as part of a conservation system, the road can provide a fixed route for vehicular travel for management of the livestock operation that also serves to protect adjacent natural resources.



Brush Management (Conservation Practice Standard 314)

Brush Management includes removal, reduction, or manipulation of nonherbaceous plants. This practice helps to:

1. Manage noxious and invasive woody plants;
2. Restore desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, and enhance stream flow;
3. Improve forage accessibility, quality and quantity for livestock; and
4. Protect life and property from wildfire hazards.



Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (Conservation Practice Standard 380)

Windbreaks and Shelterbelts are linear plantings of single or multiple rows of trees or shrubs or sets of linear plantings. When used in conjunction with a confined livestock system, a windbreak can provide the following benefits:

1. Improve air quality by reducing and intercepting airborne particulate matter, chemicals, and odors,
2. Provide living noise screens and visual screens,
3. Provide shelter for structures or livestock, and
4. Reduce wind speeds in the confined area.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about the technical and financial assistance available.