



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E5280

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality

Conservation Practice 528: Prescribed Grazing

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Pasture

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals, Plants

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 year

Enhancement Description

Timely clipping of mature forages through mowing, swathing or some other mechanical cutting will occur to increase forage palatability by setting plants back to a vegetative state for improved grazing management and forage quality

Criteria

- A written plan for matching the forage quantity and quality produced with the grazing and/or browsing demand will be followed.
- Maintain diversity of forage plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals by incorporating the intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing needed as determined by a planning process that includes: 1) Clear objectives, 2) A resource inventory including forage inventory, structural improvements and existing resource conditions, 3) Grazing plan, and 4) All potential contingency plans.
- Supplemental feed and/or minerals will be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock.

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- Timely clipping of mature forage species through mowing, swathing or some other mechanical cutting will occur to set back the vegetative state of the forage species.
- Excessive stems shall be removed during the cutting process to allow sunlight to reach the lower plant canopy.
- Cut forage species to a stubble height that will promote the vigor and health of the species and maintain stem bases that store food reserves for full vigorous recovery. **Follow NRCS state conservation practice standard recommendations.**
- Clipping should be avoided when forage is entering dormancy. Cutting heights should maintain insulation for extreme heat or cold. Use **NRCS** and local Cooperative Extension Service recommendations **on dates and stages** to avoid winterkill in cold climates.



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Documentation and Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- Y Prior to implementation, acquire a Grazing Management Plan with all the following components: (provide plan to NRCS for review and approval)
 - Producer goals, objectives and resource concerns
 - Location and condition of structural improvements
 - Watering sites with availability, quantity and quality
 - Forage inventory
 - Forage-animal balance sheet
 - Grazing plan for livestock movement
 - Contingency plan
 - **Monitoring plan**
- Y Prior to implementation, identify grazing areas and locations where clipping mature forages will occur
- Y Prior to implementation, provide a plan for mechanical clipping and livestock movement activities to NRCS
- Y During implementation keep a record of clipping activities and livestock movement
- Y During implementation, monitor forage maturity stages and livestock condition
- Y During implementation, keep record of clipping heights
- Y During implementation, take photos of areas immediately **before and** after clipping
- Y After implementation, provide the following items for review by NRCS:
 - Map and records showing clipping areas
 - Forage-animal balance sheet
 - Records of livestock movement through clipping areas
 - Documentation of clipping heights
 - Written modifications to grazing management plan based on results of clipping forages
 - Photos of fields **before and** after clipping activities
 - Notify NRCS immediately after clipping

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NRCS will:

- Y As needed, provide technical assistance to participant as requested
- Y Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528) as it relates to implementing this enhancement
- Y Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forage Harvest Management (CPS 511)
- Y Prior to implementation, review the plan provided for livestock movement and mechanical clipping
- Y After implementation, review the map, record of livestock movement, clipping activities and heights and photos.
- Y After implementation, review the modifications to the grazing management plan based on results of clipping forages

NRCS Documentation Review:

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature Date

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SOUTH DAKOTA (SD) SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

E5280

Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality

Additional Criteria for SD:

In addition to the criteria specified in the national job sheet E5280, the following additional criteria apply in SD:

Enhancement Specific Criteria:

- Clipping heights should be no less than 6 inches, optimum clipping height between 6 and 8 inches.
- After clipping forages, allow at least 3 weeks for regrowth prior to grazing (depending on weather – if dry period, may need to allow longer time periods for regrowth).
- If producer goals are to decrease invasive cool-season grasses, shorter a rest period after clipping may be appropriate. Consult a technical specialist for more information.

Requirements for Grazing Management:

- Maximum 50 percent (%) utilization. Ocular methods on key or representative areas are adequate, but utilization methods such as landscape appearance or key species should be used to calibrate field estimates. Exceptions include dormant season grazing (60% utilization) and grazing prescriptions that are designed to alter the present plant community through intensive grazing by livestock (i.e., suppression of invasive species). In these cases, the desired degree of use of management species should be documented within the grazing plan and/or assistance notes.
- Adequate plant recovery periods must be provided. On pasture provide a minimum of 30 consecutive days of growing season recovery between grazing events. The growing season is approximately April 1 through October 1.
- Alter timing of grazing in each pasture by at least 2 weeks from year to year.
- For additional information, see the SD Prescribed Grazing Standard (528) and the appropriate SD Range Technical Note.



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Additional Documentation Requirements for SD:

In addition to the documentation requirements specified in the national job sheet E5280, the following additional documentation requirements apply in SD.

- Provide photos before and after clipping
- Complete the SD Grazing Tool (SD-CPA-39 Forage/Animal Inventory, Grazing Schedule using the SD-CPA-15 or similar form, and SD-CPA-16).
- Complete a drought contingency plan using the SD Drought Tool or provide the participant with a copy of the example drought contingency plan located within the SD Prescribed Grazing Technical Note 9 (or available on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/sd/technical/landuse/pasture/>).