



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E528Q

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health

Conservation Practice 528: Prescribed Grazing

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual and Mixed), Crop (Perennial), Pasture, Range, Forest, Associated Ag Land, Farmstead

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 year

Enhancement Description

Body condition scoring (BCS) serves as a useful management tool to monitor livestock performance with respect to current and recent feeding or grazing programs. Body condition scoring is a numeric scoring system, producers can use to consistently evaluate animals' estimated body energy reserves through degree of fatness. This information can be used to adjust nutritional strategies to reach optimal BCS. Since body condition is closely associated with reproductive performance as well as feed efficiency, monitoring body condition can help producers reach production goals and increase the operation's bottom line. Knowledge and understanding of BCS will assist producers to adjust a supplemental feeding program to maintain animal health and nutrition on a-monthly-basis.

Criteria

- A written plan for matching the forage quantity and quality produced with the grazing and/or browsing demand will be followed.
- A written plan for maintaining diversity of forage plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals by incorporating the intensity, frequency, timing and duration

E528Q – Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health	August 2019	Page 1
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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

of grazing and/or browsing needed as determined through the planning process with: 1) Clear objectives, 2) A resource inventory including forage inventory, structural improvements and existing resource conditions, 3) Grazing schedule, and 4) All potential contingency plans.

- A written plan to monitor and document Body Condition Scores monthly using Land Grant University Scoring Guidelines.
- Supplemental feed and/or mineral will be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock.
- Animals must maintain ideal/Land Grant University recommended BCS for their breed, phase of production, or livestock type. (animals should not be emaciated to thin, or fat to obese).



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Documentation and Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, acquire a Grazing Management Plan with all the following components: (provide plan to NRCS for review and approval)
 - Producer goals and objectives
 - Location and condition of structural improvements
 - Watering sites with availability, quantity and quantity
 - Forage inventory
 - Forage-animal balance sheet
 - Grazing plan for livestock movement
 - Contingency plan
 - Monitoring plan
- Prior to implementation, develop a written BCS monitoring plan
- During implementation keep a record of livestock movement and BCS of livestock type, breed and phase of production
- During implementation, keep a record of supplemental feeding
- During implementation, take photos of livestock from several representative animals. Photos should be taken of the side with the entire animal in the picture frame
- After implementation, provide the following items for review by NRCS:
 - Map of paddocks used
 - Forage-animal balance sheet
 - Records of livestock movement through paddocks
 - BCS monitoring plan with livestock photos
 - Supplemental feeding plan
 - Written modifications to grazing management plan based on results of BCS monitoring and supplemental feeding program

NRCS will:

- As needed, provide technical assistance to participant as requested
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528) as it relates to implementing this enhancement

E528Q – Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health	August 2019	Page 3
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SOUTH DAKOTA (SD) SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

E528Q

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Additional Criteria for SD:

In addition to the criteria specified in the national job sheet E528Q, the following additional criteria apply in SD:

- Basics of Body Condition Scoring (BCS): <https://extension.sdstate.edu/basics-body-condition-scoring-bcs>
- Influence of Body Condition on Reproductive Performance of Beef Cows: <https://extension.sdstate.edu/influence-body-condition-reproductive-performance-beef-cows>
- BCS will be monitored during the grazing season (this may include dormant season grazing if grazed forage is expected to comprise the majority of the diet.)

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 on rangeland 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 rangelands provide a minimum of 45 days of growing season recovery between grazing events during the growing season. 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 two weeks from year to year.
- For additional information, see the SD Prescribed Grazing Standard (528) and the appropriate SD Range Technical Note.



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Additional Documentation Requirements for SD:

In addition to the documentation requirements specified in the national job sheet E528Q, the following additional documentation requirements apply in SD.

- 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 NRCS website <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/sd/technical/landuse/pasture/>).
- Optional: Use the following worksheet to help document BCS monitoring. For worksheets developed for other species, contact the State Rangeland Management Specialist



(optional monitoring worksheet)

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Monitoring Plan for Body Condition Scoring

Animal Type	Month/Stage of Production	# of Animal Type	# of Animals needed to be Monitored (1 out of 5* or 1 out of 10*)	Ideal Body Condition Score
<i>Cattle</i>	<i>May / Calving</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>5</i>

*1 out of 5 animals for herds less than 100 animals, or 1 out of every 10 animals for herds greater than 100.

SDSU Suggested Times for Body Condition Scoring: (enter month(s) when this occurs on your operation)

Calving _____

Breeding _____

2 months prior to weaning _____

Weaning _____

Late Gestation (90 days prior to calving) _____

Circle months when animals will be monitored: Include the months from above, as well as any months when grazing will occur:

January	February	March	April	May	June
July	August	September	October	November	December

Beef BCS Recommendations (from South Dakota State University Extension)

Stage of Production	Ideal BCS for:		
	Mature Cow	Heifer	Bull
Calving	5	6	-
Breeding Season	5	6	6



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Monthly Monitoring Record

Herd Name/Number: _____

(Attach additional sheets for each herd if needed)

Date of Monitoring	Pasture	# in Herd	Animal Type	Stage of Production	# of animals monitored	Average Score	Ideal Score	Additional Notes (if needed)
5/21/2020	Bob's Section	100	Cow	Lactating Cows	15	5	5	

Management actions taken when BCS is below ideal score:

Date	Management Actions taken (if any)

Photo(s) (photos can be attached or emailed – talk with your local NRCS office to see what they would prefer).

