



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY
New Mexico Supplement

CONSERVATION
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM

E528Q

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

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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).

New Mexico Requirements for ideal BCS:

Cattle

The recommended body condition score for all types and breeds is an average of 5 for most of the year. Fluctuations to 4 and 6 are acceptable; however, management actions should be considered to adjust BCS to an average of 5. Individual animals could be higher or lower, but most of the animals should be in the range of 4-6. For cows, the recommended score is 5.0- 5.5 at calving. A score of 4.5 at breeding could result in reduced breeding rates. Since cows tend to lose 0.5 during early lactation, the BCS at 5.0 is the minimum recommended at calving to prevent reduced reproductive rates. A BCS greater than 6 is acceptable if due to good pasture condition. If cattle are fed, then a BCS greater than 6 indicates that feed could be reduced to get the BCS to the desired average of 5.

In New Mexico there are breeds that have been adapted to the tough environment and can successfully reproduce at low body condition scores. NRCS must provide written permission for body condition scores below 4 for cattle breed types that the participant believes are adapted to tough terrain and naturally have low BCS.

Participants are to use the NMSU circular 575, "Managing & Feeding Beef Cows Using Body Condition Scores," found at

https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/CR575.pdf



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Horses

The BCS should stay in the moderate range (BCS 4-6). For mares, the recommended BCS is 7 at foaling. The rest of the year a BCS of 5-7 is desired. Any state extension guide can be used. The Iowa State fact sheet and app are recommended.

<https://horses.extension.org/body-condition-scoring-apps-for-horses/>

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/equine/body-condition-score>

Goats

The BCS should stay in the range from 2.5-4.0. Prior to entering winter, a minimum score of 3.0 is desirable. Reference: <https://goats.extension.org/goat-body-condition-score/>. A visual evaluation is not sufficient for goats. Several representative animals must be touched and evaluated at the lumbar area, the back area behind the ribs containing the loin, the breast bone, and the ribs and between the ribs. Any state extension guide on goat body condition score can be used. The Langston University's publication, "Body Condition Scores in Goats." is recommended. http://www.luresext.edu/sites/default/files/BCS_factsheet.pdf

Sheep

The BCS should stay in the range from 2.0-4.0. For ewes with wool, several representative animals must be felt to evaluate the amount of fat and muscle deposited over and around the vertebrae in the loin region. Reference: <https://sheep.extension.org/what-is-body-condition-scoring-in-sheep/>. Any state extension guide on sheep body condition score can be used. The Oregon State University publication is one example.

<http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/14303/ec1433.pdf;jsessionid=E1419771590557D71E6F327ED1F172CA?sequence=1>

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



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- 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

New Mexico Requirements:

- The NM Supplement for Prescribed Grazing (528) must be followed.
- Photos must be taken each month that livestock are present in the contracted fields for at least 7 days. From type of livestock, photos must be taken of 2-3 representative animals. Representative meaning the animal has body condition score like most of the other animals of that type.

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.
- Prior to implementation, review the plan provided for livestock movement, BCS monitoring and supplemental feed plan
- After implementation, review the livestock movement plan, BCS monitoring data, and supplemental feed contingency plan (if implemented)
- After implementation, review the modifications to the grazing management plan based on results of BCS monitoring and the supplemental feeding program.

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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