United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Practice Overview

Month, Year

Grazing Management (Code 528)

Managing vegetation with grazing and browsing animals to achieve specific ecological, economic, and management objectives.

Practice Information

This practice may be applied on all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed. Removal of herbage by the grazing animals is in accordance with production limitations, plant sensitivities and management goals. Frequency of defoliations and season of grazing is based on the rate of growth and physiological condition of the plants. Duration and intensity of grazing is based on desired plant health and expected productivity of the forage species to meet management objectives. In all cases enough vegetation is left to prevent accelerated soil erosion.

Application of this practice will manipulate the intensity, frequency, duration, and season of grazing to:

1. Improve or maintain desirable species composition, structure, productivity, health and/or vigor of plants and plant communities.
2. Improve or maintain the quantity, quality, and/or balance of forages to meet the nutritional needs and ensure the health and performance of grazing and browsing animals.
3. Reduce or eliminate the transportation of sediment, nutrients, pathogens, or chemicals to surface and groundwater.
4. Improve or maintain upland hydrology, riparian dynamics, or watershed function to reduce surface or groundwater depletion and improve naturally available moisture.
5. Reduce runoff and compaction and enhance or maintain key soil health components, such as soil organic matter, aggregate stability, habitat for soil organisms, water infiltration, and water holding capacity.
6. Prevent or reduce sheet, rill, classic gully, ephemeral gully, bank, or wind erosion.
7. Improve or maintain terrestrial or aquatic habitat for wildlife, fish, invertebrates, or other organisms.
8. Manage biomass accumulation for the desired fuel load to reduce wildfire risk or to facilitate prescribed burning.
9. Reduce plant pest pressure from invasive and/or undesirable plants and other pests as part of an integrated plan.

Grazing Management will be planned to meet the criteria of the practice standard. At a minimum, the plans and specifications will include the following information:

1. Client's goals and objectives for this practice

2. Map of planned grazing management units that includes identification of existing infrastructure supporting planned grazing e.g. livestock water, fence, gates, etc.
3. Inventory of current and planned forage availability by management unit. Include forage attributes such as seasonal production, species, quality, and availability.
4. Current and planned livestock and/or wildlife forage demand based on species requirements.
5. Feed and forage balance by management unit that aligns animal demand with availability of forage produced or provided, with consideration for livestock distribution, wildlife use, quality, seasonal availability, and hay production.
6. A grazing strategy that identifies how livestock will graze the management units and describes the intensity, timing, duration, and frequency of grazing.
7. Contingency plan that serves as a guide for adaptive management decisions to minimize or mitigate resource or economic impacts from episodic events: (e.g., drought, soil saturation, flooding, fire, insects, etc.)
8. Monitoring protocols and records that assess whether the grazing management is addressing the identified goals and objectives. Record keeping will be maintained and short and/or long-term monitoring conducted to support timely adaptive management decisions.

Common Associated Practices

Other practices commonly associated with Grazing Management include: Fence (382), Watering Facility (614), Heavy Use Area Protection (561), Range Planting (550), and Pasture and Hay Planting (512).

Additional information including practice specifications are available in the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.