



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY
E511137Z2

CONSERVATION
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM

Forage harvest management that helps maintain or improve wildlife habitat (cover and shelter)

Conservation Practice 511: Forage Harvest Management

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Pasture, Crop (Annual & Mixed), Crop (Perennial)

RESOURCE CONCERN ADDRESSED: Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat

PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 1 year

Enhancement Description

The timely cutting and removal of forages from the field as hay, green-chop, or ensilage in such as way and time frames so as optimize both forage yield/quality and wildlife cover and shelter.

Criteria

- Wildlife species of concern for cover and shelter will be specified on the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG), and will be a species that would be present for at least part of their life cycle in the geographical/physiographic region.
- The state's WHEG will be completed by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist. Cover and shelter habitat requirements for the wildlife species of concern will be specified on the WHEG. The total WHEG score after installation of this practice will be 0.60 or greater.
- Forage will be harvested at a frequency and height that optimizes the desired forage stand, plant community, and stand life. Harvest forage at the stage of maturity that provides the desired quality and quantity to the degree possible while still providing suitable habitat for the desired wildlife species, and without compromising plant vigor and stand longevity.



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- Harvest silage/haylage within the optimum moisture range for the type of storage utilized. Follow Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for moisture content. For optimal dry hay quality, rake at 30 to 40 percent moisture and ted or invert swaths when moisture is above 40 percent. Bale field cured hay at 15 to 20 percent moisture.
- Cut forage at a height that will promote the vigor and health of the desired forage species. Follow Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for proper stubble heights to avoid winterkill of forage species in cold climates.
- Appropriate harvest schedules, cover patterns, and minimum plant heights to provide suitable habitat for the specified wildlife species should be implemented and maintained. Time harvests to benefit the desired wildlife species by following state guidelines.

Documentation Requirements

- The state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) as completed and certified by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist when applicable. Specific bird species targeted will be notated on the WHEG, and total score after implementation will equal 0.60 or greater.
- Documentation of forage cutting heights utilized by field.
- Map delineating the hayfields selected for improving wildlife cover and shelter.