



# BRIEFING

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## Managed Haying and Grazing of CRP

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### Objective

### Analysis

### for Informed

### Decision Making

### Introduction

Producers with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land are authorized to conduct managed haying and grazing on such cropland. This expands the forage base for producers with CRP land or access to such land.

Managed haying and grazing was authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. Some managed haying and grazing was conducted in Montana in the 2003 crop year under initial provisions.

Final provisions applicable to managed haying and grazing of CRP in Montana were announced in February, 2004.

For purposes of CRP haying and grazing, the Montana State Farm Service Agency Committee established the primary nesting and broodrearing season as May 15 to July 15.

Any haying or grazing of CRP during the primary nesting and broodrearing season is a violation of the terms and conditions of the CRP contract and could result in termination of the affected acres.

### Managed Haying Provisions

The managed haying period is 90 days. In Montana CRP can be hayed

under managed haying provisions from July 16 through October 13.

Managed haying of CRP is authorized on the same field one out of every five years. After the cover on CRP acreage has been certified as fully established for one year, a producer may harvest up to 50 percent of a field or contiguous field. Haying will be limited to one cutting per year. All hay bales must be removed by October 13.

There are minimum heights after cutting (stubble height requirements) for each grass species hayed. For instance, the minimum stubble height for crested wheatgrass is two inches whereas it is 6 inches for intermediate wheat grass (Table 1).

Managed haying and grazing is restricted to the following types of CRP cover practices: CP1, Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes; CP 2, Permanent Native Grasses; CP 4B, Permanent Wildlife Habitat (corridor), noneasement; CP 4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, noneasement; CP 10, Vegetative Cover–Established Grass; CP 18B; Permanent Vegetation Cover to Reduce Salinity, noneasement; and CP 18C; Permanent Salt Tolerant Vegetative Cover, noneasement.

### Managed Grazing Provisions

The managed grazing period for

**Table 1: Required Height after Cutting of CRP Lands Managed for Haying**

Height after Cutting (in inches)	Grass Species
2	Crested Wheatgrass Siberian Wheatgrass Russian Wildrye White Clover
3	Kentucky Bluegrass Timothy Red Clover Cicer Milkvetch Birdsfood Trefoil
4	Smooth Brome Meadow Brome Orchardgrass Alfalfa Western Wheatgrass Green Needlegrass
5	Tall Fescue
6	Pubescent Wheatgrass Intermediate Wheatgrass Tall Wheatgrass Slender Wheatgrass Reed Canarygrass

\* Several of these grass species, including White Clover, Tall Fescue and Reed Canarygrass were seldom used in grass mixtures for CRP in Montana.

**Table 2: Estimates of the Production of Animal Units per Acre for Managed CRP Grazing, by Grass Species and Annual Precipitation Range**

Grass Species	10-14 Inch Precipitation	15-18 Inch Precipitation	Greater than 19 Inch Precipitation
Crested Wheatgrass	0.70	1.20	—
Siberian Wheatgrass	0.70	1.20	—
Pubescent Wheatgrass	0.75	1.25	1.50
Intermediate Wheatgrass	1.00	1.25	1.60
Tall Wheatgrass	2.00	2.50	—
Slender Wheatgrass	0.40	—	—
Smooth Bromegrass	—	1.30	2.00
Orchardgrass	0.80	1.20	1.50
Russian Wildrye	0.60	1.00	—
Timothy	—	1.00	1.50
Western Wheatgrass	0.70	0.90	1.00
Alfalfa	1.00	1.40	1.60
White Clover	—	0.60	0.75
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	0.65	0.80	0.90
Green Needlegrass	0.75	1.00	1.10
Thickspike Wheatgrass	0.75	0.80	0.90

CRP is limited to no more than 120 days per year. The established CRP grazing periods for Montana are: Spring Grazing Period, February 15 to May 14; and Summer/Fall Grazing Period, July 16 to November 12. Producers may not graze the same acreage during the spring grazing period and the summer/fall grazing period.

Managed grazing is allowed on the same field once every three years and 100 percent of a field or contiguous field may be grazed. Livestock must be removed from a CRP field when the calculated number of animal unit months (AUMs) have been utilized (irrespective of the number of days livestock have grazed). But all livestock must be removed by May 14 for spring grazing period or November 12 for the summer/fall grazing period. Unused AUMs from

one grazing period can not be use in another grazing period.

Per acre animal unit estimates by grass species and annual precipitation levels are included in the final provisions for managed grazing of CRP in Montana (Table 2). For instance, pubescent wheatgrass in an area with 10 to 14 inches of precipitation would be expected to provide 0.75 animal units per acre whereas in a area with over 18 inches of precipitation there would be expected production of 1.50 animal units per acre. These production estimates assume that actual precipitation is realized within the ranges specified and do not reflect drought conditions.

Consider as an example that a producer in a 10 to 14 inch precipitation area has 200 acres of

CRP in pubescent wheatgrass. These acres would provide an estimated 150 AUMs of managed grazing (0.75 AUMs/acre x 200 acres = 150 AUMs).

The final provisions for managed grazing of CRP in Montana also contain animal unit equivalent values (Table 3). For instance, heifers in the 18 to 24 month range would have an animal unit equivalent of 1.00.

Reconsider the example of 200 acres of CRP that was estimated to Produce 150 AUMs of grazing. The producer has 100 head of heifers 18 to 24 months of age to graze. The producer wants to determine the number of months that this 100 head could be grazed on the 200 acres of CRP. Each heifer is equivalent to one animal

**Table 3: Animal unit Equivalents by Animal Class and Kind for Utilization of CRP Land Managed for Grazing**

Animal Kind/Class	Animal Unit/Equivalent
Cow, Dry (1,000 lbs.)	0.85
Cow, (1,000 lbs.) with calf to 4 months	1.00
Cow, (1,100 lbs.) with calf to 4 months	1.10
Cow, (1,200 lbs.) with calf to 4 months	1.20
Cow, (1,300 lbs.) with calf to 4 months	1.30
Calf, 4 months to weaning	0.30
Yearling cattle, 7-12 months	0.56-0.65
Yearling cattle, 12-17 months	0.75
Heifers, 18-24 months	1.00
Bulls, 12-24 months	1.20
Bulls, mature (1,850 lb. Average)	1.50
Horse, yearling	0.75
Horse, 2-year old	1.00
Horse, mature	1.25
Sheep, mature lactating ewe, with lamb, less than two months	0.17
Sheep, non-lactating ewe	0.15
Lamb, 2 months to weaning	0.06
Lamb, weaned to yearling	0.12

unit (per Table 3), so 100 head would require 100 AUMs per month (100 head x 1.00AUM/head = 100 AUMs). The producer could graze the 100 head for 1.5 months on the 200 acres of CRP (150 AUMs/100 AUMs/month = 1.5 months).

Producers may not hay and graze the same CRP acreage in the same crop year.

### Approval for Managed Haying and Grazing

The final provisions require a producer to have a haying or grazing plan and written approval through the county-level Farm Service Agency office before haying and grazing can begin each year. So producers contemplating either managed grazing or haying need to take action through their local Farm Service Agency offices prior to the

dates for initiating spring grazing, haying or fall grazing.

Existing CRP contracts must have a Conservation Plan Modification form completed and signed by all participants on the CRP contract to add the managed haying and grazing option. This includes the most recent contracts under which cropland was just enrolled in CRP and contracts modified in the 2003 crop year under initial provisions to allow managed haying and grazing.

### Costs of Managed Haying and Grazing

For a CRP contract approved for managed haying and grazing, each acre hayed or grazed will incur a reduction in annual CRP equal to 25 percent of the scheduled annual CRP rental payment.

Consider as an example a contract where the annual CRP rental rate per acre is \$40. The payment reduction for haying or grazing would be \$10 per acre ( $\$40/\text{acre} \times 0.25$  reduction).

Before a producer enters into an agreement with the Farm Service Agency to use the managed haying and grazing option, the producer needs to consider how much harvested or grazed forage they obtain for a 25 percent reduction in the annual CRP rental payment.

Consider a managed grazing example. The producer has a CRP cover pubescent wheatgrass in a 10 to 14 inch precipitation area. An acre is expected to produce 0.75 animal units of grazing. If the annual CRP rental rate is \$40 per acre, this producer will have the rental payment reduced by \$10 per acre. The grazing cost per acre would be \$10 if fencing and watering cost, etc., were negligible. The costs of grazing per AUM would be  $\$13.33 [(\$10/\text{acre}) / (0.75 \text{ AUM}/\text{acre}) = \$13.33/\text{AUM}]$ .

Producers need to remain cognizant that under drought conditions production of AUMs will likely decline but the costs incurred per acre would likely remain unchanged.

### Producer Decisions Relative to Managed Haying and Grazing of CRP

Several factors need to be considered by CRP contract holders making decisions whether to hay or graze CRP lands under managed haying and grazing provisions, especially in light of continuing drought. The first factor that may receive consideration is which CRP lands should be hayed and grazed. Another factor is the actual cost per AUM of grazing or per ton of hay derived from the managed haying and grazing of CRP land. And

another factor is the cost of alternatives for providing feed for a producer's livestock.

In the recent drought-impacted years CRP lands were hayed and grazed in many Montana counties. But in each of these counties many more acres of CRP land were neither hayed nor grazed; such acres may be the acres considered for managed haying and grazing.

As a process for a producer to assess the advisability of managed grazing, it will be useful for a producer to determine the predominant grass species in each CRP field. Then by referencing the appropriate column in Table 2

a producer can determine the estimated AUM output under the pertinent precipitation range. If a producer is making these determinations under drought conditions, the tabled values may need to adjusted downward to reflect an adjusted carrying capacity. Improved estimates of forage availability can be obtained by weighing representative areas in a CRP field contemplated for managed grazing. Refer to the AUM analyzer at the following website: [www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt9704.html](http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt9704.html). Next the producer will need to calculate the cost per acre as 25 percent of the scheduled rental rate (and include other costs such as fencing and livestock watering when such are incurred). This 25 percent

of the annual CRP rental rate is divided by the adjusted per acre carrying capacity to determine the cost per AUM. Through these calculations the producer has some basis for comparison.

Producers will evaluate what other alternatives are available for livestock feed if the consideration is feed for their livestock. For comparison, the recent quoted AUM rate for private treaty grazing was \$15.10 (often with fencing and water distribution the responsibility of the landlord). Similar price quotes can be obtained for hay by major types. These comparisons are also useful to CRP contact holders attempting to market hay and/or grazing to other producers.



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