

# Grassland Management

Prescribed Burn, Haying, Grazing and Mowing

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***Purpose of Grassland Management:*** To provide a quality stand of grass that will offer the best possible wildlife habitat. There are a variety of effective techniques that can be used based on the landscape and availability of equipment.

## Prescribed Burn

- Burn after late April to setback aggressive/cool-season grasses
- Burn in the fall (Oct.-Nov.) to stimulate native forbs
- Do not burn after May 15 (peak nesting season)
- Suppresses woody plant growth
- Releases nutrients bound in plant litter, stimulating new growth
- Improves flowering plant growth
- Burn every 3-5 years for healthy stand
- Mow burn breaks in the fall prior to burning
- Burning rotations are encouraged for wildlife habitat benefits
- Burning is the preferred method of management



Prescribed Burn of Prairie Landscape

## Haying

- Can be used in areas where burns are dangerous or otherwise tough to conduct
- Hay post-nesting season (August 1)
- Effective for brush control
- Highest protein for forage during mid-summer during plant growth. Gives a chance for re-growth before fall
- Where practical, mowing should begin in the center of the harvested area to allow wildlife escape routes.
- Hay every 3-5 years for healthy stand



Hayed edge of Native Prairie



## Grazing

- Economically friendly option for landowners with cattle
- Graze on a 4-5 year rotation
- Can be used as a complementary management practice with burning
- Short-term rotations
- Graze during late spring/early summer to suppress cool-season (Brome, Kentucky Bluegrass) growth
- Graze in mid-summer to suppress woody vegetation growth and enhance warm season grass tillering
- Consult with a grazing specialist in advance to discuss stocking rates, timing, and duration.



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*Grazing on a prairie site*

## Mowing

- Used for grass management during establishment to suppress weed competition
- Mow post-nesting season (August 1)
- Mow every 3-5 years
- Use a rotary/flail mower or stalk chopper
- Do not use forage cutter – creates a blanket cover, suppressing growth of desired species
- Mow cool season grasses no shorter than 6". Native warm season grasses should be mowed no shorter than 10"
- Similar to a burn rotation, a mowing rotation is encouraged for wildlife benefits
- Where practical, mowing should begin in the center of the harvested area to allow wildlife escape routes.



*Mowing using a rotary/flail mower*

*Please consult with your local USDA Service Center for a more in depth look at your site's specific Management strategy.*

