

Forage Facts



GRAZING GUIDE

This guide gives an idea about the target heights to start and stop grazing many plants. The guide will be useful to managers and planners who develop and implement grazing plans for any type of animal grazing these plants.

The target “stop grazing” height will ensure enough leaf area and/or reserve energy to provide good regrowth during the subsequent rest period; this is especially important to those plants that store reserve energy above the ground in the lower stem base. This guide also provides an estimate of the number of days of “rest” needed to regrow to the target “start” grazing height during certain seasons.

The expected recovery period (rest) should be helpful in estimating the grazing cycles of particular species. However, many environmental and management factors will impact the estimates of days required to regrow to the desired “start” height.

Species	Growth Periods	Target Grazing Height -----inches-----		Expected Days of Rest Before Regrazing	Comments
		to start	to stop		
Alfalfa	Apr-May	8” to bud	3-4	14-30	Do not start grazing the same area at 8” twice in the same season.
	Jun-Sep	12” to bloom	2-3	21-40	
	Nov-Dec	Frosted	2-3	90-120	Should usually have 45 days rest immediately prior to killing frosts; thereafter, the growth should be grazed before leaves drop.
Bahigrass, Dallisgrass & associated summer species of Crabgrass, etc.	Apr-May	3-6	2-3	21-30	Frosted growth can be used flexibly, but may need supplemental protein and should be used before leaves deteriorate.
	Jun-Jul	4-8	2-3	10-21	
	Aug-Sep	4-8	2-3	20-40	
	Oct-Nov	3+	2-3	Spring	
Bermudagrass: Common, hybrid & seeded varieties	Apr-May	4-6	2-3	21-30	Frosted growth can be used flexibly, but may need supplemental protein and should be used before leaves deteriorate.
	Jun-Jul	4-6	2-3	10-21	
	Aug-Sep	4-6	2-3	20-40	
	Frosted	3+	2-3	Spring	

Species	Growth Periods	Target Grazing Height -----inches-----		Expected Days of Rest Before Regrazing	Comments
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Bermudagrass: Overseeded with Annual Ryegrass	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-30	
	Apr-May	6-8	2-3	14-21	Control the height of ryegrass so it does not shade emerging bermudagrass.
	Jun-Jul	3-5	1-2	10-21	
	Aug-Sep	3-5	1-2	21-30	
	Oct	2-4	1-2	45-60	Graze Bermuda close during late Sep and Oct to prevent shading of overseeded or volunteering (ryegrass) during their establishment phase. Do not allow animals to graze ryegrass until it reaches target height.
	Nov-Jan	6-8	3-4	45-90	Target heights directed toward ryegrass during Nov through Apr.
Bermudagrass: Overseeded with Crimson Clover or Vetch	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-45	
	Apr-May	6-8	3-4	14-21	Control the height of legumes so they do not shade the emerging Bermuda.
	Jun-Aug	3-5	1-2	10-21	
	Sept-Oct	2-4	1-2	21-45	Graze Bermuda close during late Sep and Oct to prevent shading of overseeded or volunteering legumes during their establishment phase. Do not allow animals to graze winter crops until they reach target height.
	Nov-Jan	4-8	3-4	45-90	
Bermuda grass: Mixed with Ladino and/or Red Clover	Feb-Mar	4-6	2-3	21-45	
	Apr-May	4-6	2-3	14-21	Control the height of clovers so they do not shade the emerging Bermuda.
	Jun-Jul	4-6	2-3	10-21	
	Aug-Sep	4-6	2-3	20-40	
	Oct-Nov	4-6	2-3	30-60	Graze Bermuda close during late Sep and Oct to prevent shading of overseeded or volunteering clovers. Do not allow animals to graze clovers until they reach target height during winter.
	Dec-Jan	4-6	3-4	45-90	

Species	Growth Periods	Target Grazing Height -----inches-----		Expected Days of Rest Before Regrazing	Comments
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Bermuda grass: overseeded with prairiegrass	Mar-Apr	8-10	3-4	21-30	Control the height of prairiegrass so it does not shade the emerging Bermuda.
	May-Jun	6-8	3-4	14-30	
	Jul-Aug	4-6	2-3	10-21	Manage Prairiegrass to produce mature seeds in Jul-Aug to provide for volunteer establishment during Sep and Oct. Control Bermuda growth in Sep and Oct by close grazing, but not so close that prairiegrass seedlings are eaten.
	Sep-Oct	4-6	2-3	45-90	Graze Bermuda close during late Sep and Oct to prevent shading of over seeded or volunteering prairiegrass during the establishment phase. Do not allow animals to graze prairiegrass until it reaches target height.
	Nov-Feb	6-10	3-4	45-90	
Bermudagrass: overseeded with Smallgrain	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-30	Target heights directed toward smallgrain during Nov through Apr.
	Apr-May	6-8	2-3	14-21	Control the height of smallgrains so they do not shade the emerging Bermuda.
	Jun-Jul	3-5	2-3	10-21	
	Aug-Sep	3-5	2-3	21-30	
	Oct	3-5	1-2	45-90	Graze Bermuda close during late Sep and Oct to prevent shading of over-seeded smallgrain during the establishment phase. Do not allow animals to graze smallgrain until it reaches target height.
	Nov-Jan	6-8	3-4	45-90	Target heights directed toward smallgrain during Nov through Apr.
Bluegrass, Kentucky with White Clover	Mar-May	4-6	2-3	14-30	If clover is White Dutch, then possible to graze to 1½ inches.
	Jun-Aug	6-8	2-4	30-45	
	Sep-Oct	6-8	2-3	21-45	
	Nov-Feb	4-6	2-3	Spring	
Caucasian Bluestem	May-Jul	8-12	3-4	14-30	
	Aug-Sep	8-12	3-4	21-40	
	Oct-Dec	8-12	4-5	Spring	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but quality may be limiting and utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing paddock in a short time period (<3 days).
Crabgrass and associated warm season species	May-Jun	6-8	2-3	14-30	
	Jul-Aug	6-8	2-3	14-30	
	Sep-Oct	4-6	1-2	Replant in Spring	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but quality may be limiting and utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing a paddock in a short time period (<3 days). Use frosted growth before leaves deteriorate.

Species	Growth Periods	Target Grazing Height -----inches-----		Expected Days of Rest Before Regrazing	Comments
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Crimson Clover and mixtures with Ryegrass or Smallgrain	Sep-Oct	6-8	3-4	45-60	Control the height of the smallgrain or ryegrass so they are not shading the clover.
	Nov-Jan	6-8	3-4	30-90	
	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-45	
	Apr-Jun	6-8	2-3	14-30	
Crop Residue: (Corn or Sorghum or Cotton Stalks)	Sep-Dec	Immediately following harvest	Leave some residue for soil protection if cover crop is not planted	Not applicable	It is best to use residue as soon as possible following crop harvest to minimize deterioration of fodder. It is important to leave residue for cover or plant cover crop.
Fescue or Orchardgrass with or without Ladino Clover	Mar-Apr	4-6	2-3	30-45	If mixture is to be "stockpiled" in autumn, clover may be shaded if canopy reaches more than 10-12 inches in height prior to grazing. Stockpile will be taller; stripgraze.
	May-Jun	6-8	2-3	14-30	
	Jul-Aug	6-8	3-4	30-60	
	Sep-Oct	6-8	2-3	21-35	
	Nov-Feb	4-6	2-3	45-90	
Fescue (<70%) mixed with Bermuda or Crabgrass	Feb-Mar	4-6	2-3	30-45	Grazing height during the summer is dictated by the species to be favored. Shorter "stop grazing heights" (1-2 inches) will favor Bermuda and Crabgrass and taller (>3") will favor the Fescue.
	Apr-Jun	6-8	2-3	14-30	
	Jul-Aug	6-8	3-4	21-45	
	Sep-Oct	6-8	2-3	21-35	
	Nov-Jan	4-6	2-3	45-90	
Gamagrass, Eastern	Apr-Jun	14-24	6-8	21-30	During the establishment year, allow plants to reach seed head stage prior to grazing or harvesting, leaving minimum of 10-12" stubble for winter cover.
	Jul-Sep	14-24	6-8	21-45	
	Oct-Nov	12-46	6-8	Spring	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing a paddock in a short time period (<3 days). Allow 10-12" growth prior to frost.
Kudzu	May-Sep	Full leaf out and stems elongating	For regrowth leave >50% leaf coverage	30-45	To eradicate, keep canopy completely defoliated, especially in late summer.

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Lespedeza, Annual (Kobe and Korean)	May-Jun	6-8	3-4	30-45	Use all frosted growth before leaves drop.
	Jul-Sep	4-6	2-3	21-45	
	Frosted	4-6	2-3	Spring	
Millet: Foxtail, German, Browntop	Apr-May	8-12	4-6	30-45	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing a paddock in a short time period (<3 days).
	Jun-Aug	Boot to Heading	2+	No re-growth following stem elongation	
Millet: Pearl, Hybrid or Dwarf	May-Jul	14-20	6-8	14-30	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing a paddock in a short time period (<3 days).
	Aug-Oct	14-20	6-8	21-40	
Millet (Pearl or Hybrid): Double cropped with Annual Ryegrass or Smallgrain	Oct-Nov	6-10	3-4	30-45	
	Dec-Jan	6-8	3-4	45-90	
	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-30	
	Apr-May	6-8	2-3	Millet planted in May/June	Annual Ryegrass and smallgrain growth will decline sharply in May and the Millet will be planted.
	Jun-Jul	14-20	6-8	14-21	Millet planted in late May or early June into ryegrass/smallgrain stubble or following cultivation.
	Aug-Sep	14-20	6-8	21-30	Millet used by end of September (grazed or clipped to 2-3" stubble) so that ryegrass or smallgrain can be planted.
Prairiegrass: (Rescue grass, "Matua")	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	30-45	Allow one seed crop to mature for volunteer seeding in fall.
	Apr-Jun	6-8	3-4	14-30	
	Jul-Aug	6-8	3-4	21-35	
	Sep-Oct	6-8	3-4	21-35	
	Nov-Jan	6-8	3-4	30-60	
Red Clover and mixtures with cool-season grasses	Apr-May	6" to bud	3-4	14-21	Should usually have 45 days rest immediately prior to killing frosts; thereafter, the growth may be grazed before leaves drop.
	Jun-Sep	10" to bud	3-4	21-40	
	Nov-Dec	Frosted	2-3	Spring	
Ryegrass, Annual	Sep-Oct	6-10	4	30-45	
	Nov-Jan	6-8	3-4	45-60	
	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-35	
	Apr-Jun	8-10	1-2	14-21	

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Smallgrain (Barley, Oat, Rye, Triticale, Wheat)	Oct-Dec	6-10	3-4	30-90	
	Jan-Feb	6-8	3-4	30-60	
	Mar-May	6-12	2-3	14-30	
	Jun	3+	1-2	Replant in fall	
Sudangrass, Sorghum-Sudan: Double cropped with Annual Ryegrass or Smallgrain	Oct-Nov	6-8	4	30-45	Potential prussic acid poisoning for 3 days after the first killing frost or when grazing prior to 18" height.
	Dec-Jan	6-8	3-4	45-60	
	Feb-Mar	6-8	3-4	21-30	
	Apr-May	6-8	2-3	Summer annual planted	Annual Ryegrass and smallgrain growth will decline sharply in May and the summer grass will be planted.
	Jun-Jul	18-24	5-7	14-21	Summer annuals planted in late May or early Jun.
	Aug-Sep	18-24	5-7	21-40	Summer annual used by end of Sep (grazed or clipped to 2-3 inch stubble) so that a winter grass can be planted into stubble or into prepared seedbed.
Sudangrass, Sorghum-Sudangrass, Johnsongrass	Apr-May	18-24	5-7	21-30	
	Jun-Jul	18-24	5-7	14-21	
	Aug-Sep	18-24	5-7	21-40	
	Oct-Nov	6+	2	n/a	
Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Big Bluestem	Apr-Jun	14-18	5-7	21-30	During establishment year, allow plants to reach seed head stage prior to grazing, leaving minimum of 10-12" stubble for winter cover.
	Jul-Aug	18-22	5-7	21-40	
	Sep-Oct	16-20	8-12	Spring	The late summer growth may be grazed in fall, but utilization will be improved with very high stock density grazing a paddock in a short time period (<3 days). Allow 10-12" growth prior to frost.

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