



CRP HAYING AND GRAZING

Non-Emergency and Emergency Use

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**, a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat.

In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorized CRP. The program is also governed by regulations published in 7 CFR Part 1410. The program is implemented by FSA on behalf of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Haying and grazing of CRP acres is authorized under certain conditions to improve the quality and performance of the CRP cover or to provide emergency relief to livestock producers due to certain natural disasters. There are two types of haying and grazing authorization: non-emergency and emergency. These rules do not apply to Grassland CRP.

Modified Conservation Plan

Before CRP acres are declared eligible for haying or grazing, a modified conservation plan developed by NRCS or a technical service provider must be obtained. The modified conservation plan must be based on current site conditions and include the authorized duration and reflect local wildlife needs and concerns. The primary purpose must be to maintain vegetative cover, minimize soil erosion and protect water quality and wildlife habitat quality. These plans must prevent long-term damage to the conservation cover.

File Request Before Starting

CRP participants requesting emergency or non-emergency haying and grazing **must file a request** with their county FSA office indicating the acres to be hayed or grazed **before the activity begins**.



Non-Emergency Haying and Grazing

In general, non-emergency haying may be utilized every three years and nonemergency grazing may be utilized every two years. Additional grazing may be available to new and beginning farmers.

Eligible Practices

All practices are eligible for non-emergency haying and grazing except for CP12 Wildlife Food Plot and several tree practices. Contact your FSA office for a full list of ineligible practices.

Emergency Haying and Grazing

Emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disaster. Emergency haying and grazing status is reviewed and authorized each Thursday using the U.S. Drought monitor. Counties are approved for emergency haying and grazing due to drought conditions on a county by county basis, when a county is designated as level “D2 Drought - Severe” according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The U.S. Drought Monitor is available online at droughtmonitor.unl.edu.

Requests for emergency haying and grazing for a county may also be initiated by the FSA County Committee due to a livestock emergency. The request must document a 40 percent or greater loss of forage production due to the disaster event.

Primary Nesting Season

All states have set a Primary Nesting Season for birds in which activity is restricted. Generally those periods begin in March and end in July. During this time grazing can occur with restrictions on carrying capacity and no haying can be conducted.

Eligible Acres

Emergency haying or grazing is limited to the acres physically located within the boundary of the eligible county or portion of a county. Under this authority, acres will only be authorized for a specified time and may end earlier than announced if conditions improve. Producers can use the CRP acreage for their own livestock or may grant another livestock producer use of their CRP acreage. For emergency haying, producers are limited to one cutting and are permitted to sell the hay. Producers must follow their conservation plan to timing and duration of haying or grazing.

Eligible Practices

Emergency haying and grazing is authorized on all practices outside the primary nesting season. Acres enrolled in State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) can be authorized if specifically allowed in the applicable agreement.

If the county is approved for Livestock Forage Program (LFP) payments, only certain practices can be hayed on 50 percent of the eligible acres.



Ineligible Acres

Acres ineligible for both non-emergency and emergency haying and grazing include acres devoted to:

- Useful life easements;
- Land within 20 feet of a stream or other permanent water body; and
- Any acres where haying and or grazing would cause long-term damage to the CRP cover.

For More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements or restrictions may apply. To find more information about FSA programs, visit farmers.gov or contact your local FSA office.

To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.