

Grazing Height and Rest Guidelines by Forage

Appropriate grazing and recovery periods allow forages to renew energy reserves, improve plant vigor, maintain or improve plant diversity, and provide long-term persistence of a productive forage stand. The grazing period should be adjusted based on stage of growth or forage height. Rest period between grazing events will vary in length depending on growing conditions and forage recovery.

Table 1. Guidelines for Grazing Heights and Rest Periods

Forage Species	Height to Begin Grazing (inches)	Height to End Grazing (inches)	Recovery Time (days) ¹
Tall Fescue	8-12	4-5	20-45
Orchardgrass	8-10	4-5	20-45
Bluegrass	5-8	2	20-45
Reed Canarygrass	10-12	3-4	20-45
Small Grains (Wheat, Rye, Oats, etc.)	8	2-3	7-21
Annual Ryegrass	6-8	3-4	7-21
Alfalfa	10-16	3-4	14-30 ²
Sericea lespedeza	8-10	4-6	14-45
Caucasian Bluestem	8-10	3-4	14-45
Bermudagrass	6	2	7-21
Eastern Gamagrass	18-24	8-10	21-45
Big Bluestem	18-24	8-10	21-45
Indiangrass	18-24	8-10	21-45
Switchgrass	20-30	10-12	21-45
Crabgrass	6-8	2-3	14-21
Pearl Millet	18-20	8-12	21-35
Forage Sorghum	20-30	5-7	21-35
Sorghum Sudan Hybrids	20-30	5-7	21-35
Sudangrass	20-30	5-7	21-35

¹Recovery times are best based on regrowth. If pastures have not regrown, feed hay to animals in a sacrifice area.

²Grazing types of alfalfa can sustain with shorter recovery times under optimum growth conditions compared to hay types of alfalfa.