



## CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

### E528Q

# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health

Conservation Practice 528: Prescribed Grazing

**APPLICABLE LAND USE:** Crop (Annual and Mixed), Crop (Perennial), Pasture, Range, Forest, Associated Ag Land, Farmstead

**RESOURCE CONCERN:** Animals

**ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN:** 1 year

### Enhancement Description

Body condition scoring (BCS) serves as a useful management tool to monitor livestock performance with respect to current and recent feeding or grazing programs. Body condition scoring is a numeric scoring system, producers can use to consistently evaluate animals' estimated body energy reserves through degree of fatness. This information can be used to adjust nutritional strategies to reach optimal BCS. Since body condition is closely associated with reproductive performance as well as feed efficiency, monitoring body condition can help producers reach production goals and increase the operation's bottom line. Knowledge and understanding of BCS will assist producers to adjust a supplemental feeding program to maintain animal health and nutrition on a monthly basis.

### Criteria

- A written plan for matching the forage quantity and quality produced with the grazing and/or browsing demand will be followed.
- A written plan for maintaining diversity of forage plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals by incorporating the intensity, frequency, timing and duration

E528Q – Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health	August 2019	Page   1
---	-------------	----------



## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

of grazing and/or browsing needed as determined through the planning process with: 1) Clear objectives, 2) A resource inventory including forage inventory, structural improvements and existing resource conditions, 3) Grazing schedule, and 4) All potential contingency plans.

- A written plan to monitor and document Body Condition Scores monthly using Land Grant University Scoring Guidelines.
- Supplemental feed and/or mineral will be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock.
- Animals must maintain ideal/Land Grant University recommended BCS for their breed, phase of production, or livestock type. (Animals should not be emaciated to thin, or fat to obese.)



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Documentation and Implementation Requirements

### **Participant will:**

- Prior to implementation, acquire a Grazing Management Plan with all the following components: (provide plan to NRCS for review and approval)
  - Producer goals and objectives
  - Location and condition of structural improvements
  - Watering sites with availability, quantity and quantity
  - Forage inventory
  - Forage-animal balance sheet
  - Grazing plan for livestock movement
  - Contingency plan
  - Monitoring plan
- Prior to implementation, develop a written BCS monitoring plan
- During implementation keep a record of livestock movement and BCS of livestock type, breed and phase of production
- During implementation, keep a record of supplemental feeding
- During implementation, take photos of livestock from several representative animals. Photos should be taken of the side with the entire animal in the picture frame
- After implementation, provide the following items for review by NRCS:
  - Map of paddocks used
  - Forage-animal balance sheet
  - Records of livestock movement through paddocks
  - BCS monitoring plan with livestock photos
  - Supplemental feeding plan
  - Written modifications to grazing management plan based on results of BCS monitoring and supplemental feeding program

### **NRCS will:**

- As needed, provide technical assistance to participant as requested
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528) as it relates to implementing this enhancement

E528Q – Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health	August 2019	Page   3
---	-------------	----------



**North Dakota Sideboards:** 10% of the herd will be evaluated on a monthly basis using BCS, management decisions based on BCS scores must be documented or 25 head whichever number is less. Acres to be contracted will be the acres the selected herd(s) rotate through and meet 528. Documentation requirements for meeting the 528 practice must be implemented to fulfill the requirements of this enhancement. Refer to the 528 specification and the Statement of Work for guidance on meeting practice specification. Please see additional resources below for more information on Body Condition Scoring. Including worksheets that have been developed to help producers meet enhancement criteria.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/south-dakota/body-conditioning-scoring-bcs-resources>

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/Body%20Condition%20Scoring%20Beef%20Cows%20UGA%20Extension.pdf>

<https://library.ndsu.edu/ir/bitstream/handle/10365/5343/as1026.pdf?sequence=1>