
# Livestock Grazing Management

Photo: Geoff Kay / BCT

## What you need to know before you enter an agreement

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) has developed livestock grazing guidelines for landholders with private land conservation agreements. The guidelines identify land where grazing may be an appropriate conservation management tool and explain the grazing strategies available to conserve and enhance biodiversity in native grassland and grassy woodland ecosystems.

Grazing is allowable where it is the best management option for biodiversity conservation. Grazing to achieve biodiversity conservation is different from grazing for production, so it is important to understand the practical implications and differences.

Please note: The BCT generally refers to livestock as being sheep and cattle for use in conservation grazing actions.

This fact sheet highlights some of the key elements of our livestock grazing guidelines, which are available on the BCT website in the **Resources** section under *Guidelines on land management for conservation.*

Additional resources are listed on the back of this fact sheet.

If you are interested in finding out more about how grazing is applied as a conservation management tool in BCT agreements, please contact us at info@bct.com.au.

## Setting conservation goals

When looking at grazing within a conservation area it is important to identify conservation goals or targets that are appropriate for your property. These could include:

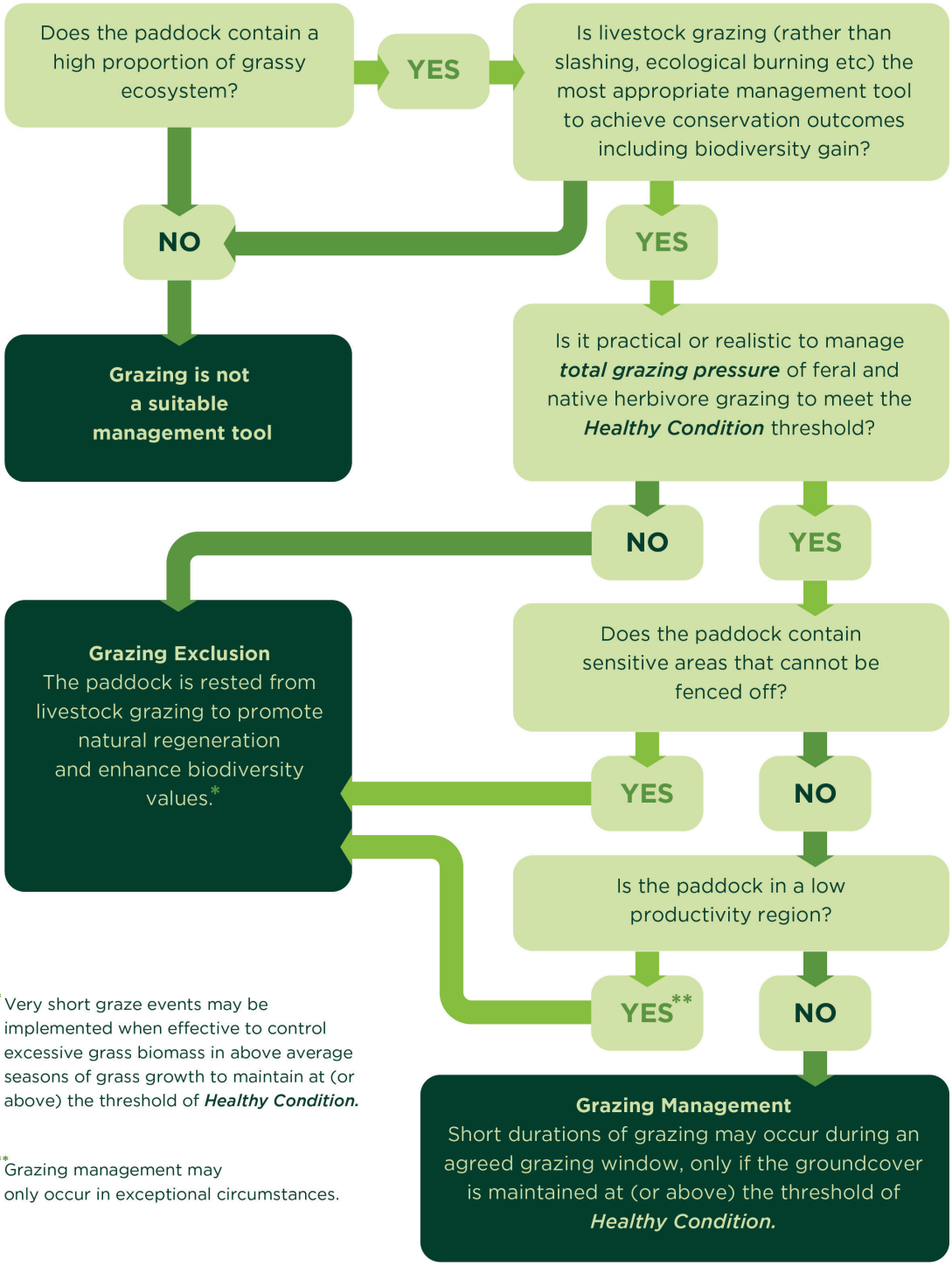
- increasing the cover of desirable species (eg. native grasses such as weeping grass or box grass)
- decreasing the cover of undesirable species (eg. exotic annuals such as black oats or rhodes grass)
- increasing the abundance of highly foraged (palatable) native forbs (eg. glycine or chocolate lily)
- improving habitat for threatened species (eg. plains wanderer or golden sun moth)

To help meet these conservation goals, we work with landholders to determine if grazing is the best management tool for their conservation area. Where grazing is suitable, a site appropriate **grazing strategy** will provide key rest periods that allow for the seed set and germination of native species.

## Choosing a grazing strategy

Grazing strategies that provide resting periods are important for the health and recovery of native grassy ecosystems in agricultural landscapes. Choosing an appropriate grazing strategy depends on a combination of factors including the condition of the grassy ecosystem on site, climate, soil productivity, paddock size and topography.

### Determining your grazing strategy




* Very short graze events may be implemented when effective to control excessive grass biomass in above average seasons of grass growth to maintain at (or above) the threshold of ***Healthy Condition.***

** Grazing management may only occur in exceptional circumstances.

**Total grazing pressure =** the combined grazing pressure from all grazing animals (domestic, native and feral) on vegetation, soil and water resources.

## Healthy condition vegetation

Healthy condition refers to native vegetation that is close to its natural state and relatively undisturbed. The condition of the native vegetation in your conservation area is measured by two key factors: ground cover (measured as a percentage) and average bulk sward height of dominant native grass species (see below figure and BCT livestock grazing guidelines).

The BCT uses **thresholds** for both these factors to indicate when livestock can be introduced or must be removed. If grazing is permitted in your agreement you are required to **monitor** the vegetation and **report** annually on its condition.

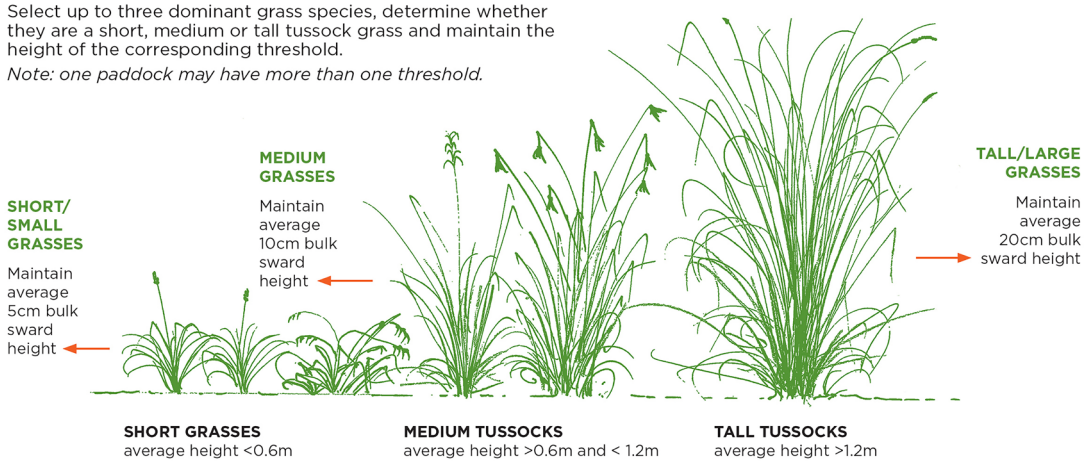
The below table shows the ground cover threshold for each Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) region, while the figure shows the grass sward heights for different native grass tussocks. Together these form the Healthy Condition thresholds that must be regularly monitored.

| IBRA Region | Agro-climatic Description | Rainfall (mm)* | Healthy Condition Threshold *(% Ground cover)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australian Alps | Cold Winters, summers short | 1025 | 80 |
| Brigalow Belt South | winters mild, even growth throughout year | 644 | 80 |
| Broken Hill Complex | Semi-arid, moisture highest in winter | 206 | 50-60 |
| Channel Country | Desert, water limited | 175 | 50-60 |
| Cobar Peneplain | Semi-arid, moisture highest in winter | 379 | 50-70 |
| Darling Riverine Plains | Semi-arid, moisture highest in winter | 379 | 50-60 |
| Mulga Lands | Semi-arid, moisture highest in winter | 297 | 50-60 |
| Murray Darling Depression | Semi-arid, moisture highest in winter | 254 | 50-60 |
| Nandewar | Summer moisture limiting, winters cool | 721 | 80 |
| New England Tablelands | Max moisture availability winter-spring | 824 | 80 |
| NSW North Coast | Warm and wet | 1104 | 80 |
| NSW South Western Slopes | Summer moisture limiting, winters cool | 595 | 80 |
| Riverina | Dry cool winters | 327 | 70-80 |
| Simpson Strzelecki Dunefields | Desert, water limited | 149 | 50-60 |
| South East Corner | Temperate wet | 807 | 80 |
| South Eastern Highlands | Max moisture availability winter-spring | 682 | 80 |
| South Eastern Queensland | Warm and wet | 1297 | 80 |
| Sydney Basin | Temperate wet | 881 | 80 |

*% Ground cover - includes living vegetation, dry litter, coarse woody debris (logs), mosses and lichens, excluding exposed bare ground surface rock*
**Where a range is specified, use rainfall gradient to determine appropriate threshold*

**Table 2 – Native grass sward height thresholds**

Select up to three dominant grass species, determine whether they are a short, medium or tall tussock grass and maintain the height of the corresponding threshold.
*Note: one paddock may have more than one threshold.*

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## Get in touch

If you would d like to know more about BCT agreements and how grazing is applied, please email info@bct.nsw.gov.au or call us at 1300 992 688.

## List of resources

For general information about BCT programs and access to all BCT resources, visit www.bct.nsw.gov.au

For the BCT Livestock grazing Grazing, scan QR code.


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