



GAP Information leaflet

A Checklist for developing a grazing policy

About this leaflet

This leaflet is intended as a guide and checklist of grazing related issues that could be included within a grazing policy; each situation is different and thus other information can be included for your own set up.

Ensure that the policy is circulated widely within your organisation and to others involved with site grazing management, and that its contents and detailed implications are understood and implemented; this is especially important for any risk assessments.

1. What is a grazing policy?

A conservation grazing policy is in effect a grazing management plan outlining what management is intended to achieve, when, by whom and with what resources. It encompasses all the information relevant to the keeping of livestock to assist the management of semi-natural habitats.

2. Why bother with one?

- To ensure continuity of management over time despite staff turnover, holidays etc
- To help with funding bids / as a requirement of a funding body
- To demonstrate best practice and transparency to others involved with conservation grazing, the general public, public and private bodies, inspection bodies and complainants
- To gain the support and commitment of staff, volunteers, partner organisations and colleagues
- To enable sites to be managed for multiple uses without conflict, i.e. to set objectives and priorities
- To ensure legal compliance for the health and welfare of your stock
- To allow continual objective appraisal and improvement of your livestock system leading to improvements in performance, cost savings and increased skills of staff
- To ensure the desired management can be achieved with the resources available

NB: Before you start:

- **Are the resources (political, financial, time / labour, and skills) in place for a grazing operation?**
- **Are you going to work with graziers or have your own stock?**
- **What and where are the sources of further advice:**
 - *GAP Training Courses (Livestock Checkers and Practical Introduction to Extensive Grazing courses):* enquiries@grazingadvicepartnership.org.uk
 - *GAP publications (Guide to animal welfare for conservation, Breeds Profile Handbook, Local Grazing Scheme best practice guide and Information Leaflets: www.grazingadvicepartnership.org.uk)*

3. Suggested sections

3.1. Introduction

- What is the brief of the policy document, why has it been produced etc?
- What is the historical basis for grazing and what is the current (site) management status / situation?
- What is the rationale for grazing?

3.2. Policy statement

- A resume of the document and summary of why and how grazing will be organised

3.3. Overall responsibilities

Site Management Plans – Who, when, how often, monitoring, review etc

The management plan should identify the objectives for grazing the site. It should specify the grazing regime (stock species and type, timing, duration and stocking densities) required to produce the optimum sward height and structure throughout the grazing season. It should also outline how grazing will fit in with other site management objectives, e.g. wildlife, landscape, public access, heritage, community, legal, grant etc.

Site Assessment – who, when, how often, monitoring, review etc

A site assessment should be carried out by the Registered stock keeper, Reserves Manager and / or any other competent member of staff prior to commencement of grazing, to estimate best class of stock and stocking density to achieve conservation objectives, to identify any works necessary before grazing can commence, stock checking procedures and anything else identified within the grazing policy that is relevant!

Stock welfare and public risk assessments - Who, when, how often, monitoring, review etc

Stock welfare and *public* risk assessments should also be undertaken by the Registered stock keeper and / or any other competent member of staff, and involving Reserves Manager, other site staff and volunteers and grazier prior to the commencement of grazing, identifying *welfare risks to stock* and *risks to people from stock* arising from grazing animals on the site. A written record of this risk assessment should be placed in the reserves file.

Grazing Licences

Where the site is to be grazed by animals belonging to a private individual ('Grazier'), a grazing licence or approved agreement should be issued to the individual by the Registered stock keeper / Reserves Manager for the period requiring grazing, signed and agreed by both parties.

Owned Livestock / Registered Keeper / overall responsibilities / delegation of responsibilities

The Registered stock keeper (who must be sufficiently competent, experienced and trained if required), has overall responsibility for the welfare of livestock belonging to the organisation. This responsibility includes stock checks (or delegation of the same to competent, trained persons), compliance with all legal requirements for keeping stock, drawing up a stock emergency action plan, routine veterinary treatments and husbandry, drawing up an annual stock animal health plan, planning grazing schedules and transport of livestock (see below).

Overall responsibility should never fall to a volunteer or anyone without some form of contract.

Duties may be delegated to persons other than the named member of staff with overall responsibility, provided that the person with overall responsibility ensures that the delegated person is *competent* to perform the allocated duties e.g. looking (although site managers/ animal keepers should still undertake regular stock checks). A looker does not replace the role of the animal keeper/ grazier.

Disputes

Issues arising from grazing on nature reserves will be referred in the first instance to the Reserves Manager or Senior Conservation Officer and ultimately to the Conservation Director.

3.4. Responsibilities of the Registered Keeper

Health and welfare regulations

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000

- The regulations require all stock keepers to have access to the relevant welfare codes and to be familiar with their provisions. Where appropriate, employers must ensure that their staff receive guidance on them
- State that animals shall be cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence

"The relevant animal welfare legislation applies to owners as well as to any person [keeper] looking after [animals] on their behalf, wherever [those animals] are located. A written contract can be of value in ensuring that all parties are clear about their responsibilities in respect of welfare. However, the obligations imposed by law will still apply." - Extract from: Defra's `Codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock: sheep'. Details of this and other Defra publications can be found on their website, www.defra.gov.uk

Feral stock used for conservation purposes are likely to be covered by the same legislation as those kept in more domesticated situations. Animals with no registered owner are considered the legal property, and thus responsibility, of those whose land they reside on at any given time.

In conjunction with DEFRA Animal Health Officers and the State Veterinary Service, it is the statutory responsibility of County Council Trading Standards to enforce all animal health legislation. The remit of Trading Standards varies from county to county, but includes the welfare of animals in transit, at markets and ports; along with DEFRA, they are also involved with enforcing the identification of livestock.

Local Authorities coordinate Trading Standards and are the first point of contact for anyone seeking further information. There is no legal obligation to notify Trading Standards concerning ownership of stock, although it is good practice to do so.

Health and welfare questions to ask yourself:

Registered Keeper / lookers / who to involve

- Who is the Registered Keeper of the stock?
- Are the stock welfare codes of practice available and understood?
- Are staff (including the Registered Keeper) and lookers adequately trained and competent
- What stock checking, reporting and communication system do you use?
- Have you considered cow bells and radio-tracking systems to help locate animals?
- Have you contacted and involved in site visits:
 - DEFRA staff?
 - Trading Standards Officers?
 - Local RSPCA officers?
 - Reserves Officers / staff / wardens?
- Have you engaged the services of a vet?
- Who is required to be first aid trained?
- What is the lone working policy for staff involved with stock management?

- Do you have a written **Action Plan** (what to do, who to contact etc) for all animal health and welfare emergencies, e.g. down cow, fire on site, dog attack, stock on road? An example is given below:

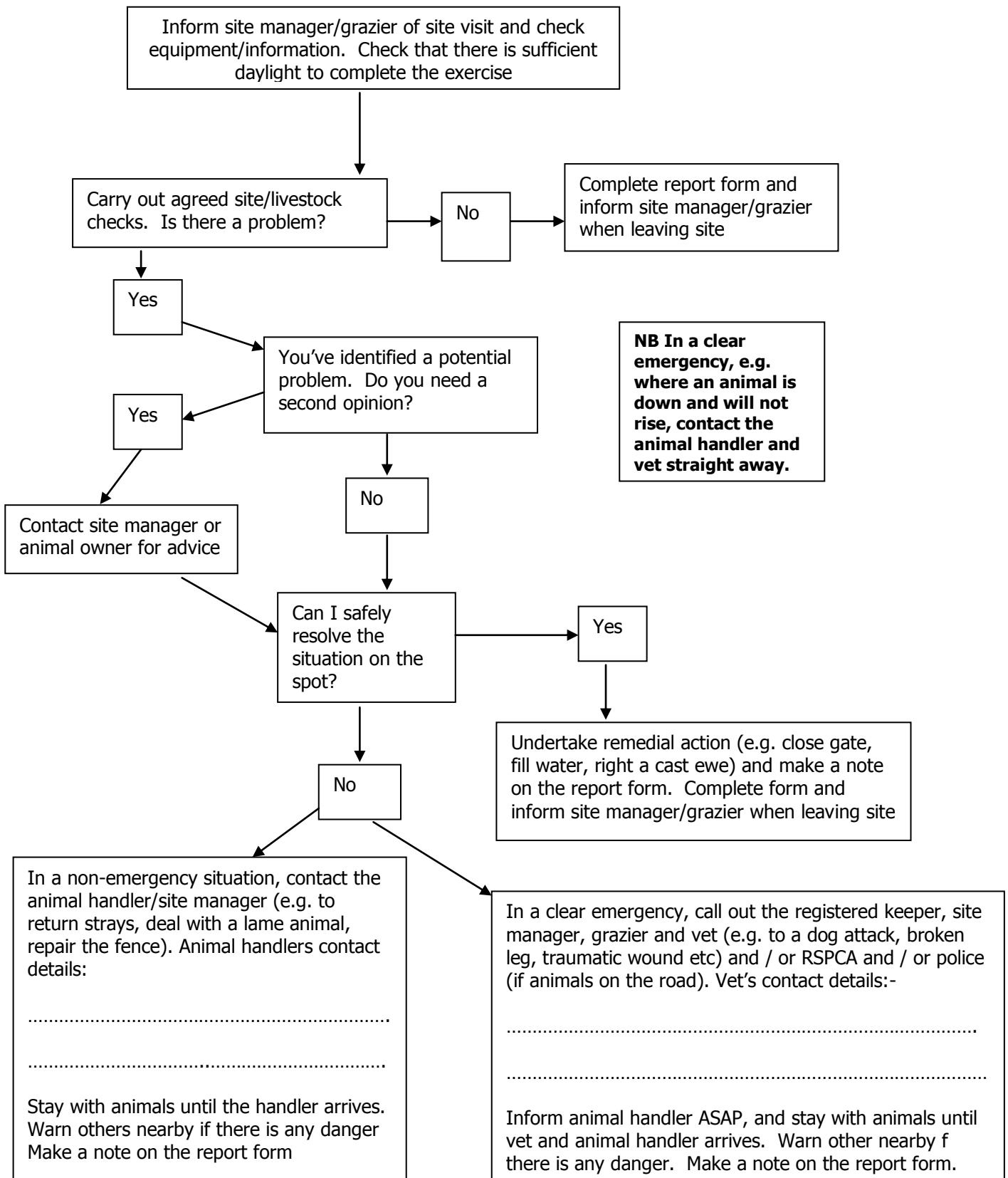


Figure 1: Stock Checking Procedure and simple Action Plan

- What procedures are in place for dealing with casualty slaughter stock? Do you understand the legal requirements for culling casualty animals and ensuring that animals that are transported alive are **fit to travel**? You need to know:
 - What to do, who to contact etc
 - Paperwork requirements for the carcase / animal
 - Exemptions to the transport requirements for casualty stock
 - How will you dispose of dead (fallen) stock (e.g. National Fallen Stock Scheme) and casualty carcasses and are you aware of the legal requirements?
 - Paperwork requirements for the herd / flock, (e.g. notifying the British Cattle Movement Service and sending them cattle passports , amending the continuous herd / flock register)?
 - Will you have a post-mortem carried out?
 - Where and how will you dispose of ageing (cull) animals?

Animal health plans / welfare risk assessments / stock management activity risk assessments / biosecurity / cleansing and disinfection procedures

- Do you have an Animal Health Plan? How often do you review it and who helps you – e.g. vet?
- Have you carried out a stock welfare risk assessment for each site, who did it and when, when will it be reviewed, where is it kept, are all relevant staff involved and understand its implications and are any action points implemented?
- Have you carried out and implemented risk assessments for grazing sites with public access, who did it and when, when will it be reviewed, where is it kept, are all relevant staff involved and understand its implications and are any action points implemented?
- What infrastructure and procedures are in place to catch, handle, load, treat, manage, (e.g. feed and water) and transport livestock?
 - Have risk assessments been carried out and implemented for each operation?
 - Have staff been trained and are they competent?
 - Is your towing vehicle and trailer legal?
 - Do drivers need to take a trailer towing test?
 - Do you understand the legal requirements of handling and transporting stock, (especially the disinfection and biosecurity requirements for taking stock to market)?
 - What biosecurity controls and measures do you have in place?
 - What cleansing and disinfection measures do you have in place?

Paperwork / animal identification / animal tracing requirements

- Have you registered with defra for a Holding Number and flock / herd identifier number?
- Are you aware of the farm records that you need to keep?
 - A continuous herd / flock record
 - A movement book
 - A medicine record
 - Movement licences for sheep, goats, pigs and deer
 - Do you understand what a Single Occupancy Authority is and how it can be useful if you are grazing different parcels of land under different ownerships?
 - Are your sheep, goats and pigs identified correctly?
 - Do you understand the Cattle Tracing System?:
 - Tagging requirements
 - Cattle passports
 - British Cattle Movement Service
- Have you prepared passports for any equines (horses, ponies, donkeys)?
- Are you aware of Notifiable diseases e.g. Foot and Mouth, BSE, Scrapie? These have to be reported to Defra (in reality these are mostly identified by a vet and he / she does the notification)?
- Are you aware of Reportable diseases that have to be treated by law? (Only Sheep Scab at present)

- Remember that cattle will require routine testing as part of Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and Brucellosis controls – have you good handling facilities and staff help available?
- Have you investigated electronic identification and farm management software systems that are available for stock identification and management?

3.5. Organisational responsibilities to others

NB: Others includes yourself, your staff, members of the public, volunteers, neighbouring landowners etc

Insurance / grazier agreements / people - stock risk assessments

- Do you or your grazier have third party liability insurance for stock, and if you have a grazier have you seen an up to date policy document?
- What system do you run with your grazier?
 - A grazing licence
 - A contract arrangement
 - Share farming agreement
 - Farm Business Tenancy
 - Grazing let
 - Stock leasing agreements, e.g. where you purchase stock, lease them to the grazier for a nominal fee, he / she looks after and maintains the original number of animals and uses them to graze the site but keeps any progeny from breeding
- What are the legal requirements for these agreements? **Seek specialist advice – solicitor and / or land agent**
- Who will claim any agricultural or environmental payments for the site?
- Who is responsible for any management requirements for Single Payment Scheme, management agreement or agri-environment scheme?
- Who is responsible for what on site, e.g. checking animals, water supplies, health, welfare and legal requirements?
- Have you carried out and implemented risk assessments for:
 - Catching, handling and dealing with stock in pens?
 - All relevant aspects of stock management?
 - Grazing sites with public access?
- Have you carried out a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessment for any products used in stock management, from disinfectants to medicines and including Zoonotic organisms?
- Remember Biosecurity and cleansing and disinfection controls and measures
- Have your staff been trained in the use and handling of animal medicines?
- Have your staff been trained in the handling and management of stock?

3.6. Stock management objectives

- What stock system will you run?
 - Species mix and breed (and / or crosses)?
 - Breeding / Non-breeding animals?
 - If you run breeding stock, where and how will this take place?
 - Domestic or feral?
 - Sex and age of animals?
 - Where from (bearing in mind disease control, e.g. TB) and availability?
 - How many and how much will they cost to buy?
 - Over what timescale will you build numbers?
 - Background – used to semi-natural habitats, easily handled or shy, immunity to local disease, used to people and dogs?
 - Will you finish animals for sale or produce store animals?

- Have you costed the operation and prepared forward budgets?
- Will you need back up holding land and supplementary feed (and will you need to feed on site)?
- Will you need buildings?
- Will you market stock or products from your grazing scheme? **You may want to engage a consultant to assess the feasibility of doing this**
- Will the stock be kept purely for conservation purposes or do you anticipate economic production?
- What is the design of the grazing system?
- What about product / system assurance schemes – LEAF, Organic, FABBL, Freedom Foods, other?
- What about wild grazers and browsers?
- What stocking rates throughout the year?
- What about impacts on flora and fauna, e.g. invertebrates, reptiles?

Site infrastructure

- Have you considered:
 - Fencing type (including electric), siting, compartmentalisation and checking?
 - Type (permanent or mobile) and positioning of handling system?
 - How will you maintain public access and what access furniture will you use?
 - What is the water supply? Piped (existing or new), standing open water bodies, rivers or streams, pumps?
 - What range of forage / habitat is available on site and immediately adjacent?
 - Do you need winter housing? Have you investigated woodchip corrals for out wintering stock?
 - What shelter is available on site?
 - Is adequate sized and secure back up land freely available?
 - Is emergency access and back up land / buildings available?
 - What about a woodchip corral for wintering stock?
 - Do you need conserved forage? Is access adequate in bad weather if you need to supplementary feed, or can you store feed on site? Where on site will you feed?
 - What about site signs and access furniture for the public?
 - What about the impact of fences on wildlife?
 - What about site security from vandalism and other nuisance activities?
- What ground and vegetation management is needed before grazing starts, e.g. Bracken control?
- How often will you check stock, who will do it and do you have emergency Action Plan?
- Are you involving local people with site management? E.g. voluntary wardens, stock lookers, practical work parties, community events
- What about vandalism and other undesirable behaviour?
- How will you organise public consultation and involvement and when?

3.7. Finances

- Have you prepared a Business Plan, including stock system budgeting? **You may want to engage a consultant to do this.**
- NB: **don't** just look at *capital* costs, e.g. for fences, remember *revenue* costs, e.g. labour, staff time

3.8. Monitoring

- Have you designed a suitable monitoring programme that you have the resources to implement and interpret? Will you do it in-house or use expert help?
- What techniques will you use, how often, and how often will you review your grazing system as a consequence of monitoring?

References

- Clarke, R. and Mount, D, (1998): '*Site management planning – a guide*', Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, ISBN 0 86170 491 6
- Marrable, C.J., (2004): Ashdown Forest Grazing Action Plan, ENRR 602, free from Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/default.htm
- Gibson, C.W.D., (1997): Reintroducing stock grazing to Savernake Forests; a feasibility study. ENRR 224. , free from Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/default.htm
- Wide variety of information available from the Grazing Advice Partnership website www.grazingadvicepartnership.org.uk
- The Lowland Grassland Management Handbook free from Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/information_for/farmers_and_land_managers/default.aspx
- Towards Sustainable Grazing for Biodiversity: an analysis of conservation grazing projects and their constraints (English Nature Research Reports No. 316): free from Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/default.htm
- The Upland Management Handbook: free from Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/information_for/farmers_and_land_managers/default.aspx
- Nibblers - Conservation Grazing Online Discussion Group: To join contact enquiries@grazingadvicepartnership.org.uk