What are Grazing BMPs?

Grazing BMPs are simple, field-tested practices that help farmers and herders harvest forage while protecting soil, water, and biodiversity. They balance animal performance with ecosystem health and are a core Nature-based Solution (NbS) for working lands. In plain words, graze smart, rest pastures, keep water clean, and grow more grass next season.

Examples: rotational (multi-paddock) grazing, planned rest, correct stocking rate, off-stream water (solar-powered), protected riparian zones, and invasive control.

Why Are Grazing BMPs Important?

Grazing BMPs help you to:



Where Should Buffers Be Created?

Every grazed pasture can benefit, but prioritize:



IMPORTANT: SEASON MATTERS. AVOID GRAZING WET STREAMBANKS (HIGH TRAMPLING RISK) AND SHIFT USE TO DRIER PERIODS OR AFTER BANKS FIRM UP.

Recommended "Guardrails"

(Rules-of-thumb to start)

Limit distance to water:

- Keep cattle within ~200–275 m of a water point.
- Reduce overgrazing near water & underuse of distant areas.
- Use multiple small water points to spread grazing pressure.



Rotate Before It's Overgrazed:

- Move at 10–15 cm Stubble Height.
- Don't Return Until Fully Recovered.



Rest is non-negotiable:

- Plan 30+ Days Rest in Normal Conditions.
- Longer Rest in Heat/Drought.
- Shorter Rest in Peak Growth.



Protect riparian strips:

- Fence Buffers: >5–10 m Per Side.
- Provide Off-Stream Water, Full Exclusion is Best.



Track Monthly & Adjust Plan as Needed

Plant Height • Erosion • Water Tests • Spot Streams • Grazing Log

Rotational (multi-paddock) system

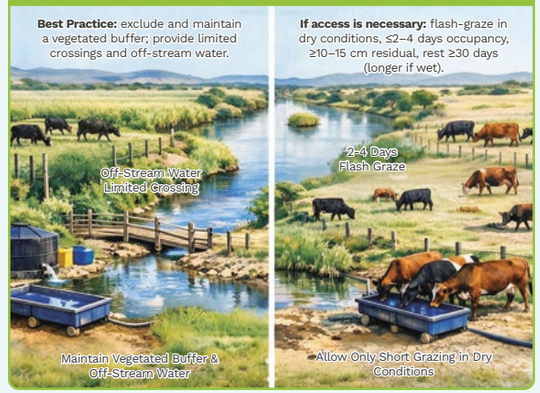
1. Rotational (multi-paddock) system: Divide a pasture into 6–16 paddocks; move based on plant height and recovery, not the calendar.



2. Water system essentials



3. Riparian interface



How to Start Grazing BMPs

Step 1: Talk Together & Set Shared Goals

Convene land users; set shared goals for pasture condition, animal performance, and water quality.



Healthier Pasture



Better Animal Gains



Clean Water & Stable Streambanks



Less Mud & Easy Moves



A Shared Plan Makes Things Smoother

Step 2: Quick Pasture Walk-Through

Map paddocks, water points, sensitive areas; note forage types and bare ground.



Step 3: Choose the BMPs You'll Use This Year

Focus on practices that bring the best results. Rotational plan, buffer protection, water distribution, invasive control, drought contingency.



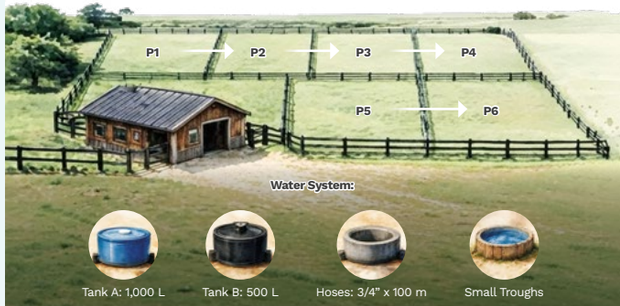
Drought Backup Plan

Walk & check together:

- Mark paddocks, water points, and shade areas.
- Note Forage Types: Grass, Beans, Weeds.
- Better Water Distribution.
- Weed/Invasive Control.
- Drought Backup Plan.

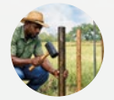
Step 4: Sketch the Design

Paddock sizes/sequence; stop/start heights; rest periods; stocking rate; and water/tank specs. This is your "Season Plan", keep it visible in the barn.

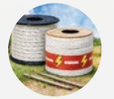


Step 5: Gather Materials (Keep It Simple & Local)

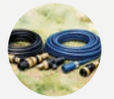
Prefer local posts, polywire, simple quick-couplers, and durable troughs.



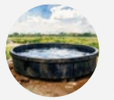
Local Posts & Step-Ins



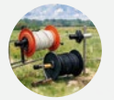
Polywire & Tape



Quick-Couplers & Hoses



Durable Trough or Tank



Reels & Gates

CHOOSE GEAR THAT'S EASY TO FIX IN THE FIELD

Step 6: Install the Basics

Fencing, valves, pads (heavy-use areas) where needed to prevent mud.









Step 7: Start Grazing, Watch, Adjust

Manage and improve as you go. Move on height/recovery; adjust numbers and days with rainfall and growth.

1. Move When Grass Reaches Stop Height



2. Return When Grass is Fully Recovered



3. Adjust for Weather & Seasons



Field Guide: Quick How-To

Three-step stocking-rate guide

Available Forage

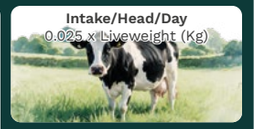
Quick Guide – Available Forage (AF)

Short + Sparse ≈ 500–1,000 kg/ha
Short + Dense ≈ 1000–1,500 kg/ha
Knee-High + Sparse ≈ 1,500–2,500 kg/ha
Knee-High + Dense ≈ 2,500-3,500 kg/ha
High + Sparse ≈ 3,500–5,000 kg/ha
High + Dense ≈ 5,000–6,500 kg/ha



Intake/Head/Day

0.025 x Liveweight (Kg)

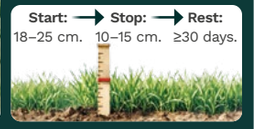


Grazing Days

Forage + (Animals x Intake)



Start: 18–25 cm. → **Stop:** 10–15 cm. → **Rest:** ≥30 days.



Community Roles in Grazing BMPs



Local elders: share wisdom and settle conflicts.



Water and environment team: protect streams and wetlands.



Farmers and herders: manage livestock and pasture.



Youth and women groups: help with projects and monitoring.



Ag. Extension officers: provide technical advice and training.



Local leaders: mobilize and build support.

DOs and DON'Ts

DO

- Move animals before hitting minimum stubble height.
- Keep animals <300 m from water.
- Fence streams and use off-stream water.
- Rest longer after drought, heat, or wet trampling.



DON'T:

- Leave livestock in riparian strips during wet periods.
- Overstay in one paddock.
- Assume "one stocking rate fits all".



Monitoring & Maintenance Checklist



1. **Pasture condition:**
   - Plant height start and stop.
   - Residual cover %.
   - Bare ground areas.
2. **Riparian areas:**
   - Bank erosion and hoof shear.
   - Vegetation health.
3. **Water quality and health:**
   - Turbidity tube check.
   - *E. coli* testing.
   - Livestock condition.
4. **Grazing log:**
   - Dates and rainfall.
   - Livestock count.
   - Forage height and days grazed.
5. **Performance snapshot:**
   - Stable banks and buffer zones.
   - Improved riparian plants.
   - Less sediment and *E. coli*.
   - Wider buffers (>5-10 m).
   - More benefits over time.

Community Success Indicators

Healthy Pastures:

- Faster Regrowth & Diverse Sward.
- Fewer Weeds.
- ≥ 85-90% Ground Cover at season end.



Cleaner Water:

- Clearer Flow After Storms.
- Fewer Cattle in Stream.
- Stable Banks and Vegetation.



Thriving Herd:

- Steady Weight Gains.
- Clean Coats, Less Lameness.
- Even Manure Distribution



GOOD STEWARDSHIP BUILDS A BETTER COMMUNITY

Quick Training Exercise for community, led by a field officer or community champion (15 Minutes)

Walk to a paddock: measure forage height with a ruler. Decide: Graze, Move, or Rest?

Pace distance to water: if > 300 m, propose a portable trough site.

Mark a riparian line (high-water mark) and flag a buffer. Identify any stock paths into the stream and sketch a crossing

Handling Conflicts Fairly

Keep choices transparent: align on pasture condition targets, rotation calendars, and riparian rules; use local leaders and neutral mediators to resolve competing uses (grazing vs. water access). Document agreements and revisit after the season.



Who to Contact for Help

County Environment Office

NEMA officers

WRUA (Water Resource Users Associations)

Local conservation NGOs (ICF, WWANC...)

Community forest associations

Agricultural extension officers

The Nature Conservancy

Community Practical Field Guide for Grazing Best Management Practices (BMPs)



PROTECTION • RESTORATION • MANAGEMENT