

2.2 Species Rich Dry and Calcareous Grassland

Definition: *Species rich dry and calcareous grassland* occurs on moderately well drained and/or calcareous soils. If more than 5 wildflower species, indicative of dry/calcareous conditions, are located in an area of one square metre at 6 out of 10 random points in the field then it is “species rich” dry or calcareous grassland. Indicator species include bird’s foot trefoil, thyme and lady’s bedstraw. (A full list of species rich indicator plants is found in Appendix III). There must be less than 25% ryegrass, timothy and white clover in the sward. There are two grazing options for managing species rich dry/calcareous grassland. The most suitable grazing option will be agreed at the outset of the agreement and will be noted on the farm management map.

Aim: to maintain and enhance the conservation value of species rich grassland through appropriate agricultural practices such as positive grazing management and restrictions on fertiliser and pesticide use.

Biodiversity objectives: species rich dry and calcareous grassland contribute to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the Irish hare, chough, lowland meadow, maritime cliff and slopes, coastal sand dunes and calcareous grassland. The proposed Biodiversity Action Plans for meadow cranesbill, yellowhammer, the marsh fritillary and some NI Priority Species, such as the wall brown, dingy skipper and small blue butterflies and Irish eyebright will also benefit.

Management requirements

- **Option 1:** Year round grazing at a stocking density of 0.5 LU/ha
- OR**
- **Option 2:** No grazing between 1 May and 31 July. Stocking density must not exceed 0.75LU/ha between 1 August and 30 April
 - Excess grass may be saved for hay or silage but must not be cut until after 15 July

- No cultivation, reclamation, chain harrowing, infilling, dumping, drainage or application of lime, herbicide, pesticide, slurry, poultry litter or any other material, is permitted
- Where fertiliser has traditionally been applied, applications of **farmyard manure only** must not exceed 15kg Nitrogen (N) per hectare per year
- Application of lime requires written permission from DARD
- Supplementary feeding sites, temporary silage clamps and storage areas for big bale silage or hay are not permitted
- The spread of scrub/trees must be controlled
- Trees must not be planted on species rich grassland
- Rolling can be carried out between 1 June – 1 April
- No poaching

Further advice

The annual payment includes an element for routine positive management such as scrub control. Scrub should be prevented from spreading on species rich grassland – see appendix IV for further information. Noxious weeds may be controlled by cutting between 15 July and 15 March or with herbicides, applied using a spot sprayer only.

Existing drainage systems can be maintained but not widened, deepened or extended.

Management plans are provided for participants in the
**Environmentally Sensitive Areas and
Countryside Management Schemes**

