

2.4 Species Rich Grassland Cut For Hay

Definition: if more than 5 indicator wildflower, grass or sedge species are located in an area of one square metre at 6 out of 10 random points in the field area, and the field is traditionally cut for hay, then it is “*species rich*” grassland cut for hay. (A full list of species rich indicator plants is found in Appendix III).

Aim: to maintain and enhance the conservation value of species rich grassland cut for hay and ensure the survival of a traditional farming practice through appropriate cutting periods, appropriate aftermath grazing and restrictions on fertiliser and pesticide use.

Biodiversity objectives: the proposed Biodiversity Action Plans for meadow cranesbill, yellowhammer, the marsh fritillary, lowland meadows, and some NI Priority species, such as the dingy skipper, wall brown, narrow small-reed and Irish eyebright will also benefit.

Management requirements

- Hay must be cut but not before 1 July.
- Spring grazing during April and May is permitted where this is traditional practice. Fields must, however, be closed up by 15 May and hay not cut until 1 August.
- The aftermath must be grazed, to prevent grasses becoming too lush.
- Grazing is not permitted between 1 November to 31 March.
- No cultivation, reclamation, infilling, dumping, drainage or application of lime, herbicide, pesticide, sheep dip, slurry, poultry litter or any other material, is permitted.
- Where fertiliser has traditionally been applied, applications of **farmyard manure only** must not exceed 15kg N per hectare per year.
- Rolling is not permitted from 1 April to 30 June.
- Supplementary feeding sites, temporary silage clamps and storage areas for big bale silage or hay are not permitted.
- Trees must not be planted on species rich grassland sites.
- The spread of scrub/trees must be controlled.
- No poaching.

Further advice

In extreme weather conditions, grass may be made into big bale silage, with *prior* written permission from DARD and must have been cut and turned twice. Noxious weeds may be controlled by cutting between 1 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.

The annual payment includes an element for routine positive management such as scrub control.

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

