

Grazing Wildflower Grasslands

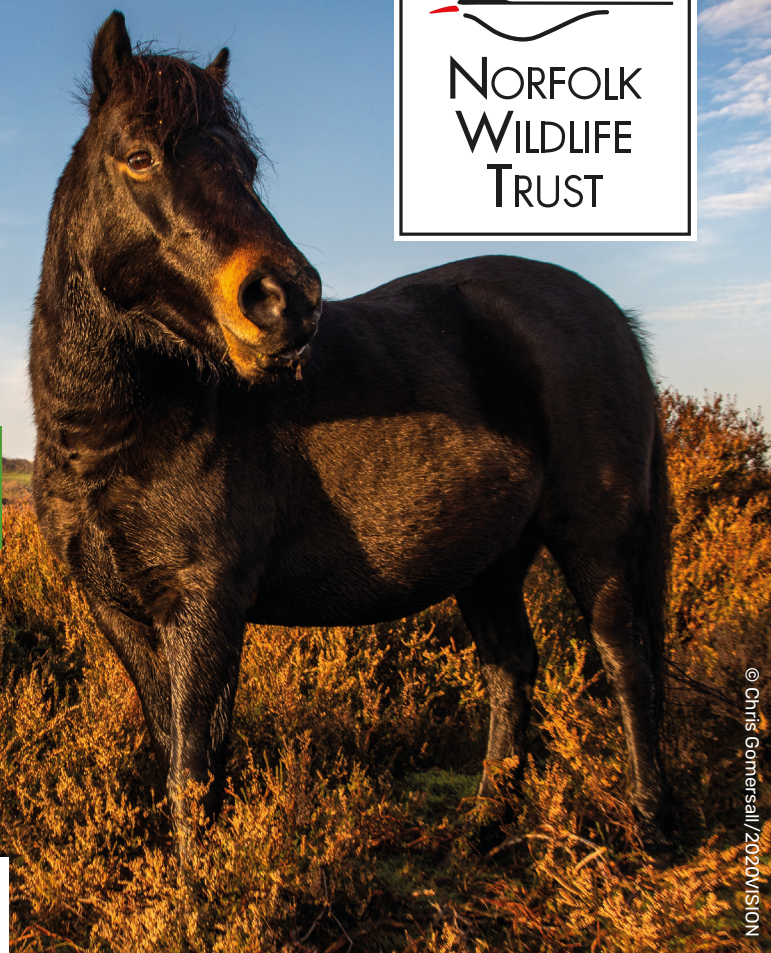
Advice for graziers and landowners

Grazing can be a valuable way to manage Norfolk's grasslands and benefit the plants, insects, birds and mammals that these grasslands support. Grazing helps keep rank vegetation from becoming dominant and encourages a more open sward that favours a greater diversity of herb and grass species.

If you are arranging for a grazier to come onto your land there are a number of practical and legal matters that will need discussing and agreeing beforehand. These can then be used as the basis for drawing up a grazing agreement.



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Management objectives

It is important that grazing is compatible with the management objectives for the land.

- Ensure the type and breed of livestock and stocking density will achieve the desired results. If any agri-environment grant schemes cover the land, the maximum number of livestock units and grazing periods stipulated by these schemes must be adhered to. Any designations covering the land (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest, registered organic) may also require particular grazing regimes and conditions.
- Find out whether the landowner, or any agri-environment grant schemes or designations covering the land permit supplementary feeding.
- Turning on and taking off dates need to be agreed by both parties, and preferably recorded in writing (for example, in an email confirming the arrangements). It is important for site condition and animal welfare that livestock are removed before they overgraze.
- Agree who will be responsible for controlling noxious weeds such as creeping thistle and ragwort and what methods will be used for control. If your grazier or your land is registered organic this will have implications for the way that weeds are controlled. Similarly, land covered by agri-environment grant schemes may require permission or stipulate methods for weed control.

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Husbandry and welfare

- Water is essential. The site may have a suitable pond or ditch that holds water all year round and is accessible to livestock. If not, water will need to be available by mains or bowser supplied drinking trough(s). Lower troughs may be required for sheep.
- Livestock need to be regularly checked to ensure their welfare. Agree who will be responsible for this and how often it needs to be done. Ensure there is an emergency procedure should a problem arise. The grazier should be responsible for the welfare of livestock and any veterinary costs.
- Stock proof fencing/boundaries are essential. The type of fencing needs to be appropriate for the type of stock and the site to be grazed. Electric fencing has the advantage of being portable but is not always suitable. Many graziers prefer permanent stock fencing as it is more secure and requires less ongoing management.
- It is important to agree who will be responsible for checking fences and gates and carrying out any necessary repairs.
- Agree whether shelter needs to be provided for livestock, particularly on exposed sites or open fields with no shade.
- Low-lying grassland can be subject to seasonal flooding e.g. in river valleys and coastal grazing marsh. To prevent stock being stranded, they must be able to retreat to higher ground. Alternatively, grazing can be timed to avoid potential flooding periods.
- Consider the effects on public rights of way and the need to provide warning signs at entrance points. It is always advisable to have signs informing the public of the presence of a bull or cows with calves where public or permissive footpaths go across grazing fields and to advise that dogs are on leads. It is illegal to keep a recognised dairy bull in a field crossed by a right of way. Bulls of all other breeds are also banned from such fields unless accompanied by cows or heifers.
- Ensure access routes to the grazing is arranged and understood by both parties.
- Identify loading/corraling areas that have good vehicular access and where they will not impact on sensitive ground.

Other terms and conditions to consider

- Ensure the duration of the grazing agreement is clear. If the landowner is claiming any form of Stewardship payments then be sure to confirm this to the grazier and you may want to state that the grazier cannot make any claim for subsidy or payments for the grazing area. Ensure that whoever is claiming Stewardship payments is liable for meeting the requirements associated with the payments and is clear what responsibilities this entails.
- Agree on monies to be paid to either the licensor (landowner) or licensee (grazier). This may depend on who will be claiming any Stewardship, or other, payments. A small peppercorn exchange of money might be enough to formalise some agreements.
- Ensure that no tenancy will be created unless that is the intention.
- Stipulate terms of termination of the agreement by the either party, in writing, with agreed notice period.
- Ensure that the licensor is able to enter the grazing area and carry out operations as necessary.
- Ensure that both you and the grazier are adequately insured for grazing on your land.
- All livestock must be appropriately registered and tagged and graziers are responsible for any tags including new or lost tags.



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Thanks to Suffolk Wildlife Trust for the original text.

Ideally all the key points raised above should be set out in a simple document that is signed by both landowner and grazier.