

How long should I wait to graze newly planted forages?

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It is **absolutely critical** to prevent newly planted pasture plants from being grazed too soon. Little seedlings may actually be pulled up (roots and all) by grazing too soon. At a minimum, grazing too early will stunt and slow the establishment of the plant.

As a general rule of thumb, one needs wait until the forage has reached its specific target height to begin grazing. Each species has its own specific target height (Table 1). For perennial forages that need to put down a taproot or other extensive root system, it is often helpful to allow these plants to reach their reproductive stage (i.e., let it put up a seed head or flower) before being grazed.

Table 1. Recommended grazing heights for beginning and ending grazing and the recovery period needed between grazing some common forage species.

Crop	Target Height (inches)		Recommended Rest Period (days)
	Begin Grazing	End Grazing*	
Alfalfa (grazing types)	10-16	2-4	15-30
Annual Ryegrass	6-12	3-4	7-15
Bahiagrass	6-10	1-2	10-20
Bermudagrass	4-8	1-2	7-15
Clover, White	6-8	1-3	7-15
Clovers, Other	8-10	3-5	10-20
Orchardgrass	8-12	3-6	15-30
Pearl millet	20-24	8-12	10-20
Small grains	8-12	4	7-15
Sorghum/sudan	20-24	8-12	10-20
Switchgrass	18-22	8-12	30-45
Tall Fescue	4-8	2-3	15-30

* Height at end of grazing should take into consideration lower quality forage. Source: Adapted from Forage Pocket Guide, by Don Ball, Garry Lacefield, and Carl Hoveland. 1999.

Learning *for* Life

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CSS-F034

January 2009

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

J. Scott Angle, Dean and Director.