

Updated January 2014

Appropriate grazing management of bogs helps to maintain the peatland habitats in good condition. The overall impression of a bog in good condition is where the ground is wet enough for you need to wear wellingtons to walk across and is too wet for trees and bushes to grow. The vegetation comprises of a mix of Sphagnum mosses, short heather, cross-leaved heath and cotton grass. By grazing the bog with the right numbers and type of stock, tall heather, shrubs and rushes will be trampled and lightly browsed, allowing Sphagnum moss to colonise underneath.

Grazing will contribute to the following:

- Maintenance of the open peatland
- Restoration and maintenance of open habitat previously encroached by scrub
- Diverse wetland surface in terms of structure and species composition

Stocking Density

Bogs and fens may have a range of different habitats. The overall stocking density is determined by the proportions of habitats in the area to be managed. In general, it is best to graze bog habitats in conjunction with adjacent semi-improved/improved grassland which gives the stock a choice of forage, helps maintain stock condition and helps prevent the bog being more than lightly grazed. The figures below are given as a general guide.

Open bog	0.02 LU/ha/yr
Fen/swamp	0.1 LU/ha/yr
Wet purple moor grass heath	0.25 LU/ha/yr
Semi natural grassland	1 LU/ha/yr

One livestock unit is equivalent of one cow, 0.15 ewes. You may need to consider grazing/trampling pressure from wild deer in your calculations.

Timing

The ground conditions on the site will dictate when stock are introduced and removed. Sites can be grazed during periods of drier weather in any month of the year. Winter grazing should be limited due to the low food value of winter vegetation and the increased requirement for supplementary feeding. Where birch scrub and/ or purple moor grass are a problem, graze intensively (0.5 to 1 head cattle/ha or 6 ewes/ha) during March, April and May. Always remove stock from site before poaching becomes widespread and damages the surface of the bog.

Short periods (2-3 weeks) of overgrazing can be used to check scrub regrowth. This needs to be done in dry periods to minimise damage to the ground.

Supplementary feeding

Supplementary feeding can cause damaging enrichment of peatlands. It is best kept to the peatland edges on lowland raised bogs or fens.

Animal Welfare

Stock grazing fens or lowland raised bogs will require checking daily.