

NEUTRAL GRASSLAND (UK BAP BROAD HABITAT)

The grasslands in this broad habitat have swards consisting mainly of Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. These swards vary in height according to grazing. Ungrazed or little-grazed swards are taller, with much *Arrhenatherum* and *Dactylis*, and are most commonly species-poor. More grazed swards are shorter, with a more even mix of the grass species listed above, and commonly with an abundance of herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* (three good indicators for separating neutral grasslands from acid, basic and improved swards), *T. repens*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*. Damper forms can contain abundant tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* or soft rush *Juncus effusus*. Mosses are generally not very conspicuous or abundant.

This habitat is widespread and common throughout the lowlands of Scotland and the UK as a whole. It is found mainly on deep but well-drained neutral soils. Within the enclosed lowlands it is less extensive than improved grasslands. It is less common in the uplands, where most of the grassland belongs to the acid or calcareous grassland broad habitats.

The shorter and more species-rich examples of this broad habitat are of great interest for conservation, especially because of their rich assemblages of herbs and, along with the abundance of these plants, a diverse insect fauna.

These grasslands are managed by grazing or mowing or a combination of both. They can be managed as grazing pastures or as hay meadows, or both where stock graze of the aftermath after hay is cut in summer. They receive little or no application of fertilisers and therefore (in contrast to improved grasslands) have little or no perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*.

The Lowland meadows and Upland hay meadow UK BAP priority habitats belong within this broad habitat and account for most of the more herb-rich examples. Neutral grasslands on coastal cliffs belong in the Maritime cliff and slopes priority habitat. Many of the less herb-rich and less botanically notable examples of this broad habitat do not belong in any priority habitat.

The priority habitats included within this broad habitat type are:

- [Lowland meadows](#)
- [Upland hay meadows](#)