

Culm grassland is of international conservation importance and is found only in the south-west of Britain. The extent of Culm grassland present in the UK has reduced significantly in the last century. It is estimated that the area of Culm grassland present in the early 1980's was reduced by 50% by 1991. Culm grassland is often species-rich and can support a number of species including the marsh fritillary butterfly.



Purple moor-grass rush pasture

General guidelines for the management of Culm grassland, mires and springline mires:

The best management technique for this type of habitat is cattle grazing. This should be of low intensity so that the vegetation maintains a range of heights (10-30cm) and is not reduced to a uniformly low sward.

Aim to graze from May until end-September (or later depending on the weather conditions). Earlier or later grazing or in wet weather may seriously poach the pasture and allow creeping thistle or nettles to invade.

Consider adjusting stocking rates with a higher rate in the spring and early summer, reducing towards the autumn as grass growth declines. This lowers the risk of overgrazing and poaching. Low grazing pressure / no grazing on occasional years allows the plants present to flower and set-seed.

Although limited poaching of the sward from the hooves of livestock can be beneficial and allow plants to colonise new areas, excess poaching should be avoided.

For soft rush dominated pastures, topping could be carried out in the late summer/autumn, after all flowering plants have seeded. This can reduce the dominance of the more vigorous plants, reduce scrub invasion and keep the sward more open. It is recommended that only 1/3 of a site should be cut in any one year. The taller vegetation left provides habitat for insects.

Do not carry out further drainage activity. Light ditch management may be required where existing ditches become heavily silted or overgrown.

Do not apply inorganic fertiliser and slurry as they encourage vigorous grass growth, out-competing flowering plants.

Manage invasive scrub, bracken and brambles, seek advice on appropriate techniques. Scrub is at an optimal cover for wildlife when it covers between 5 and 10% of the area. Scrub is an important wildlife habitat.



Marsh fritillary butterfly

Some of the recommendations on this leaflet may not be permitted under Stewardship agreements. Contact your local Natural England Adviser for further advice if required



Rush pasture

Burning (also known as swaling) is a recognised form of management for mires dominated by purple moor-grass. It is a particularly useful method where dead grass has built up through under management. Burning can be useful for large areas of purple moor-grass and may be difficult to carry out in small pockets of this habitat type.

Burning should be carried out between November and late February. Only 1/3 to 1/2 of a site should be burned in any one year and burning areas over 1 – 2 hectares should be avoided. The Heather and Grass Burning Code (DEFRA and Natural England: 2007) should be followed. For further information contact Natural England or DEFRA.

Avermectin boluses for parasite control in cattle prevent the development of insect populations that rapidly break down the dung. Such insects are a vital food supply for bats. Choose sensitive alternatives (details can be obtained from Natural England in their leaflet *Managing Landscapes for the Greater Horseshoe Bat: detailed recommendations*).

Sources of further information and funding may be available from:

Natural England: Countryside Stewardship management options/capital works grants

Web address: <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>

Email: devon@naturalengland.org.uk

Tel: 0300 0601110

Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Devon Wildlife Trust: Has a number of projects providing free advice to farmers and landowners across many parts of the county

Website:

<http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/our-projects>

Tel: 01409 221823

DEFRA: *Heather and Grass Burning Code (2007):*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heather-and-grass-burning-apply-for-a-licence>

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Website: <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/>

Email: info@fwagsw.org.uk

Tel: 01823 660684



Swaling