

CRP and Cattle Grazing Study

Researchers at Iowa State University, in coordination with the Farm Services Agency, are looking to understand how cattle grazing may impact environmental outcomes on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Why is CRP important?

The CRP plays a crucial role in conserving wildlife, protecting soils, improving water quality, and protecting agricultural lands. About 2- million acres of former cropland are enrolled in the CRP in Iowa.

What is this study all about?

Our goal is to understand how cattle grazing in CRP fields may impact environmental outcomes from those fields and how we may be able to find mutually-beneficial practices for agriculture and the environment.

Study outcome measures



Grassland birds thrive in Conservation Reserve Program grasslands. Our research will examine how different species of birds use CRP fields with varying timing and frequency of grazing to understand how to benefit the greatest numbers of these declining and important wildlife species.



Plant diversity supports a wide range of environmental outcomes from CRP fields, including supporting wildlife, promoting soil health, capturing green house gasses, improving water quality, and preventing the spread of noxious weeds. We will evaluate how plant communities respond to grazing treatments to maximize their benefits.



Soil health is the bedrock of productive agricultural landscapes and promoted by perennial ecosystems like grasslands. Our research will quantify soil health in CRP fields with various grazing treatments to understand how cattle may improve nutrient cycling and promote soil organic carbon.



Livestock production is essential to thriving rural communities and farms all across Iowa and when managed appropriately can have substantial environmental benefits for wildlife, water, soil, and air. We will work with cattle producers to understand how we can effectively use CRP for mutually beneficial outcomes.

We need your help! *If you're interested in participating, please review the additional details on the next page!*

**IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

You are invited to join the Grazing CRP Project

We are looking to collaborate with landowners and cattle farmers throughout the state to conduct this study. Here we describe the basics of the study and how to get involved!

Study timeline

- Grazing treatments will occur in 2025, 2026, and 2027. Final soil sampling will occur in 2028.
- Monitoring will mostly occur during the summer, though some sampling may occur year-round.

Candidate fields

Fields that can be included in the study are those that are in a practice that favors warm season grasses (like CP25, 2, or 38E) and will be enrolled in the CRP (or at least maintained in grass) through summer 2028.

Grazing Treatments

Researchers will work with landowners and farmers to assign fields into one of five treatment types. We anticipate needing six fields of each treatment for a total of 30 fields.

Grazed one year outside the primary nesting season

Grazed one year during the primary nesting season

Grazed three years outside the primary nesting season

Grazed three years during the primary nesting season

Never grazed



Current CRP policy precludes grazing during the **primary nesting season**, which spans from May 15th to August 1st and prohibits grazing in consecutive years. Our study will examine how variation in that policy will impact birds, plants, and soil.

Benefits to participants

- Understand environmental impacts of your CRP land from monitoring results.
- Access forage and CRP acres in grazing treatments.
- Opportunity to rest other pastures.
- Waived payment penalty for any grazing treatments.
- Possibly shape CRP policy and management.
- Support student research and education.

Who can participate?

We are looking for landowners with CRP and farmers with cattle who are willing to:

- Allow researchers to monitor their land from 2025 to 2028.
- Graze cattle during the assigned treatments and report performance.

For more information contact project leaders Adam Janke (ajanke@iastate.edu) or Randie Culbertson (rculber@iastate.edu)

To learn more and to sign up to help, visit <https://go.iastate.edu/INRJZ2> or scan this code.

