



# Essex Wildlife Trust

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Grazing

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## Grazing

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### Grazing as a Management Tool

Grazing is the traditional way of managing lowland grassland habitats and Essex Wildlife Trust uses this method on a number of its nature reserves. This has been made possible by the 'flying flock' of rare breed sheep based at Tollesbury Wick nature reserve. The North Ronaldsay and Shetland sheep have enabled more Trust sites to be grazed at various times of the year, whilst not having to depend on graziers to provide animals at the time required. As well as the flying flock, Tollesbury Wick has now built up a herd of rare breed Shetland cattle that are instrumental in managing the grazing marsh on the reserve along with the sheep.

When deciding on what method of grazing to use on a particular site, as well as the conservation aims, other factors that have to be considered are: the availability of grazing animals, resources to look after them, water supply and activities on the site (high usage by dog walkers may influence whether sheep are to be used). Cattle consume large quantities of water and therefore can only be practically used on sites where a mains supply is available.

However, many sites are grazed with animals not owned by the Trust. At Roding Valley, Longhorn cattle are being used to graze the flood meadows and another rare breed of cattle, Dexters have recently been introduced to Tiptree Heath and appear to be successful in controlling the scrub and bracken on the heathland.

Cattle supplied by graziers are also used on other sites including Little Haven and parts of Langdon where, depending on the grassland composition and management aims, they graze at various times of the year.

Horses graze the aftermath from hay making at Oxley Meadows where they remain until mid November. Using horses as a management tool in conjunction with the hay making continues to prove to be a successful regime for this site in maintaining the species richness of the meadows.



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