

# Supporting guidance for Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle

**This is an old version of the page**

**Date published: 30 March, 2015**

**Date superseded: 2 November, 2017**

Cattle can play an important role in creating a diverse sward with benefits for plant life, moorland birds and other wildlife.

Very diverse mosaics of differing sward heights and species can be created by mixed grazing regimes with cattle, sheep and deer.

## Wildlife benefits

Cattle are less selective in their grazing behaviour than other domestic herbivores. They tend to take large mouthfuls of mixed herbage rather than select palatable species within the sward.

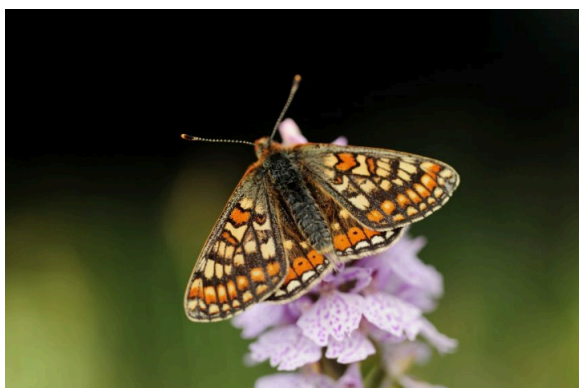
This helps to control more aggressive grassland species, and allows fine-leaved grasses and flowering plants to flourish.

Cattle can also reduce the dominance of purple moor grass where they are put onto the hill to graze its early shoots, and their trampling can break up its tussocks.

Cattle movement can break up bracken stands in summer, allow light to reach the ground and help to maintain grasses and other flowering plants in bracken stands where they would otherwise be choked out.



*Highland Cattle grazing moorland. Summer grazing is part of traditional crofting systems – Credit: Lorne Gill – © Scottish Natural Heritage*



*Extensive grazing by cattle can benefit the marsh fritillary butterfly – Credit: Lorne Gill – © Scottish Natural Heritage*

## How to increase the success of this option

Aim to achieve an even distribution of grazing to benefit both the cattle and the moorland habitats.

Use minerals or feed blocks to redistribute the cattle and to target areas where they can do most good. Take care to avoid overgrazing and poaching when feeding.

Use the diary requirement of the option to record information on seasonal stock movement, animal and habitat condition. This can help you to plan ahead or adapt next year's management.

Make sure the total off-take from summer grazing leaves enough roughage to support any winter grazing.

High-grazing levels in the summer, which remove most or all of the summer growth, can lead to heather damage in the winter, particularly where sheep are wintered on the hill or where there is a significant number of deer.

Without alternative sources of roughage, sheep and deer will browse heather, damaging the plants and suppressing its growth.

## Additional payment information

For payment purposes it is assumed that each bovine grazed on the hill will benefit 20 hectares of moorland.

The number of cattle you graze does not have to equate to the area of moorland over which they will graze. So, for example, your payment will be based on 400 hectares if you propose to graze 20 cattle over a 600 hectare hill.

Note that for the purposes of this option, one bovine is any cattle beast aged six months old or over at the start of the grazing period.