



A Guide to Good Practice

Vegetation Management

On Upland and Moorland
Commons

Summary

The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers aims:

1. To be a representative voice to support and protect the commons
2. To support better collaboration amongst commoners
3. To ensure that hill farming on common land is a worthwhile and viable activity
4. To promote positive management of the environment by commoners
5. To improve public understanding of the commons
6. To these ends, to engage with all interested parties to put forward the case of the commoners in a vigorous and constructive manner.

The Federation has prepared a series of 'Guides to Good Practice' which are intended to help commoners to deal with selected key issues. The Guides aim to share experience from different commons and to help commoners understand how others approach key issues.

Guides to Good Practice have been prepared for the following issues:

Vegetation Management

Planning

Agri-environment Schemes

Marketing

Each 'Guide to Good Practice' generally consists of a 2 page summary together with the main guide.

It is intended that the Guides will be updated on a regular basis, as new information is gathered and new policies or advice are introduced. Please contact the administrator of the Federation with any comments or suggestions.

The other Guides are available from:

Miss M Gibson, Administrator, Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers, 2 Woodland Dell, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 6NJ

This is the summary of a guide which is intended as a useful source of advice and information for members of the Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers, and others, on the appropriate management of vegetation on common land and open moorland.

- 1. The vegetation of common land and open moorland consists of relatively unimproved land and as such comprises an important environmental resource.**

The moors have been maintained in their current state by many years of agricultural use. Designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) cover many areas.

- 2. In the light of the recent changes to agricultural payments, the introduction of cross compliance and the changes to the environmental payments it is now an appropriate time to review the way in which the vegetation on the moors is managed and look at the new opportunities that may be available to commoners and graziers.**

Commoners and graziers are keen to ensure they meet the new requirements to continue to receive the Single Payment and identify any opportunities Environmental Stewardship might offer. It is also an appropriate time to address the issues of habitat degradation and loss in upland areas as new targets have been introduced by English Nature for the management of SSSI and other designated sites. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has now been in existence for some years and targets have been set to improve the environmental status of UK BAP priority habitats and species. The

issue of soil erosion can also be addressed by appropriate vegetation management.

- 3. There are a number of different groups and individuals with an interest in how the vegetation of the moor is managed, such as commoners and graziers, landowners, conservation agencies, game shooters and keepers, recreational users, DEFRA Rural Development Service and the National Park Authorities.**

These individuals and groups may have different uses for the moor but any management will generally benefit all interested parties and a consensus can be agreed when the groups are brought together.

- 4. The correct method and approach to management is very site specific and the moor cannot be treated as a whole for management purposes**

Often a mosaic of vegetation types will be present in the same area and the management prescription will have to take account of this. The help of other individuals or groups such as agents and advisors will be needed.

- 5. Deciding the best way to manage the vegetation of the moor will usually begin with a vegetation condition survey and desk study.**

This will give a better understanding of how the vegetation is currently being managed such as current grazing and burning practices and the current state of the vegetation. This will be the appropriate time to contact all the interested parties including English Nature for designated sites.

- 6. Interpretation of the survey/study will identify any threats or problems that need to be addressed such as overgrazing and opportunities such Environmental Stewardship.**

- 7. An action plan looks at the best way of addressing any problems and identifies the sources of funding to help achieve this.**

Possible actions that may be taken include changing the stocking rates in order to address the problems of over / under-grazing, introducing a burning policy and actions to achieve cross compliance.

- 8. Implementation of the plan will require full agreement of commoners, graziers and other interested parties.**

It is likely to require delegation of responsibility and agreement on a timescale for action

- 9. Methods of appropriate vegetation management might include a combination of grazing, burning, cutting, rolling and chemical treatment**

Grazing is likely to be the single factor that has the biggest effect on the health of the vegetation. The intensity, timing and type of grazing may need to be carefully managed. Burning of some vegetation types can result in vegetation that is more diverse in terms of species composition, age and structure. Cutting/rolling and chemical treatment also have a part to play, particularly in the control of bracken and rushes.

- 10. Further information is available from a number of sources including English Nature, DEFRA RDS, The Countryside Agency, The Game Conservancy Trust and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.**

The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Graziers can advise on sources of further information and assistance.

The full guide is available from: The Administrator, Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers, 2 Woodland Dell, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 6NJ.