



Code of Practice on Grassland Management

Cutting, Raking, Mowing

INTRODUCTION

The cutting and raking of grassland sites is a comparatively safe operation making it a suitable task for volunteers with a wide range in age and ability.

Hazards

However, like any practical management task, it is not without its hazards. They include:

- plants that can sting, scratch, irritate etc.
- uneven or wet ground causing trips or falls
- sun and heat (mowing is generally a summer task) causing skin problems/fatigue/dehydration
- open water creating risk of drowning, Weils disease
- long handled tools improperly carried/stored causing injury to worker or others
- sharp edged tools carried or used inappropriately
- use of power tools (mowers/ brushcutters) by untrained operators
- clearing grass etc. from mower cutter while engine still running causing severe hand injury
- running into other persons with mower causing injury
- loading and unloading mowers from trailers
- flammable fuel for power tools causing fire or explosion
- Pollen, fungal spores etc. that can cause hayfever, asthma and allergic reaction.

CODES OF PRACTICE

1. Musts and Must Nots

- Never carry long handled tools, e.g. rakes and forks over the shoulder. Only carry with tines pointing down and away.
- Edged handtools with damaged handles/loose blades must not be used.
- Edged handtools must be used with due regard to safety of the volunteer and those working nearby.
- No-one under 16 should use edged hand tools except loppers.
- Power tools may not be used without having appropriate training and demonstrated competence.
- The cutter or any power tool or mower must never be cleared of grass etc. while the engine is still running.
- Volunteers must not smoke while refueling mowers etc. or while using any petrol driven machinery.

- Refueling must never take place with the engine running.
- Petrol must never be stored within 20m of any source of ignition.
- Engines must never be started in an unventilated space e.g. a closed garage.

2. Personal Protective Equipment

- Gloves, long sleeved shirts and trousers should be worn whenever working near plants that may sting scratch or cause PPD
- All new volunteers must be advised as to the risk of hayfever/asthma
- Task leaders should be able to provide first aid advice on dealing with insect stings and bites.
- All volunteers should be advised to cover up in the sun and use sun screens.
- All volunteers should be advised to drink plenty of fluids in hot weather and take frequent rest breaks. Drinking water should be available on site.
- When using power tools/mowers, appropriate personal protective clothing must be worn e.g. gloves, steel toe-capped boots and ear defenders when using a mower and in addition a face visor when using a brushcutter.
- Gloves must be worn at all times when handling or sharpening mower knives or handtool blades.

3. Work Methods

- The area to be cut must first be checked for any unseen obstacles, e.g. rabbit holes, vegetated dykes. and all workers made aware of any hazards
- Slopes that are too steep for the type of mower being used should be avoided.
- A safe distance from potentially unstable banks or obscured water edges should be maintained when mowing.
- All hand tools should be stored safely and visible when not in use.
- Sharp edged hand tools must be regularly sharpened and their condition checked before work.
- Safe working distances must be maintained between people using edged tools and all other workers.
- When operating a mower the operator should be aware of the potential to become trapped between the mower and other objects.
- Only loads that can be comfortably lifted may be carried on pitchforks
- Care must be taken when refueling to avoid spillage and inhalation of fumes.
- Volunteers should be aware of others behind them when using or carrying long handled tools.
- Task leaders should demonstrate the correct methods for using tools such as grasshooks and scythes as necessary and point out potential hazards