



AGROECOLOGY FOR WEEDS

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AGROECOLOGICAL WEED MANAGEMENT REPOSITORY

The Agroecological Weed Management (AWM) Repository

<https://www.goodhorizon.eu/platform/awm-practices/>

is a virtual space where you can freely and openly find information and educational material on current and agroecological weed management practices in the European Union. You can browse and learn about several weed management practices and crops.

The **Agroecological Weed Management (AWM) Toolbox**, our Decision Support System that supports the user to reduce the use of synthetic herbicides and/or improve weed management by combining different Agroecological Weed Management (AWM) strategies with cover crops is LIVE !

<https://dss.goodhorizon.eu/>



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GRAZING + MOWING

DESCRIPTION & BENEFITS

Grazing + mowing is an integrated weed management practice that combines animal grazing with mechanical cutting to suppress weed growth and reduce weed reproduction. Grazing removes plant biomass through livestock feeding, while mowing cuts weeds and vegetation at a selected height and timing. When used together, these practices could:

- **reduce weed biomass** through repeated defoliation
- **prevent or reduce viable seed production** when applied before flowering or seed maturation
- **weaken some perennial weeds over time** by forcing repeated regrowth and reducing root reserves
- **improve light and space availability** for desirable vegetation
- **support integrated crop-livestock systems** by combining weed management with forage use

STRENGTHS

- Reduces weed biomass and seed production through combined defoliation and mechanical cutting, especially when timed before flowering or viable seed set
- Could target a wider range of weeds than either method alone, because mowing can control weeds avoided by livestock while grazing can reduce biomass across the field
- Repeated defoliation can weaken some perennial weeds over time by reducing regrowth capacity and root carbohydrate reserves

OPPORTUNITIES

- Could reduce reliance on herbicides by using biological and mechanical defoliation as part of an integrated weed management strategy
- Supports integrated crop-livestock systems by turning some weed or cover crop biomass into forage while maintaining vegetation management
- Could be combined with rotational grazing, reseeding, cover crops, crop rotation and targeted patch control to improve long-term weed suppression

WEAKNESSES

- Effectiveness is highly dependent on timing, weed species, growth stage, mowing height, grazing pressure and the competitiveness of desirable vegetation
- Requires careful livestock, machinery and field management, including fencing, water access, mowing equipment, labour and monitoring
- May not control low-growing, unpalatable, toxic, or spiny weeds, which may escape grazing and mowing

THREATS

- Overgrazing can weaken desirable vegetation, expose bare soil and create conditions that favour weed establishment
- Poorly timed mowing after seed maturation can spread weed seeds and increase future weed pressure
- Wet soils, drought, limited forage, animal health risks or poisonous plants may restrict the safe use of grazing and mowing

TIPS

- **identify the main weed species before deciding the timing and intensity of grazing and mowing** because annual, biennial and perennial weeds respond differently to defoliation
- **aim to graze or mow annual weeds before they produce viable seeds** as preventing seed return is key for reducing future weed pressure
- **for perennial weeds, use repeated defoliation** over time to weaken regrowth and reduce root carbohydrate reserves, but do not expect immediate eradication
- **avoid overgrazing** because weakening desirable vegetation creates open spaces where weeds can establish more easily
- **adjust** stocking rate, grazing duration and rest periods to maintain enough desirable plant cover and recovery after grazing
- **mow weeds that livestock avoid or selectively leave ungrazed** especially if they are flowering or close to seed production
- **set mowing height carefully** to damage weeds while protecting desirable species and maintaining soil cover
- **avoid mowing after weeds have mature seeds** because this may spread seeds across the field
- **avoid grazing or mowing when soils are very wet** as animal trampling or machinery traffic can cause compaction or damage to soil structure
- **monitor fields after grazing and mowing** to check weed regrowth, seed production, desirable vegetation recovery and bare soil
- **consider animal health** and avoid grazing areas with poisonous, toxic, spiny or otherwise harmful weed species unless safe management is confirmed

LIABILITY DISCLAIMER

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