

**Bighorn National Forest
Powder River Ranger District**

2016

Annual Operating Instructions

For

Upper Meadows S&G Allotment

Recommended By: _____ Date: _____
Rangeland Management Specialist

Accepted By: _____ Date: _____
Permittee

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
District Ranger

As Permittee, my signature on these Annual Operating Instructions certifies that there is no change to my permitted livestock or base property ownership as described in my grazing permit.

Upon signature by the District Ranger, these Annual Operating Instructions are hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permit number 01288B.

Any changes or deviation from the direction outlined in the Annual Operating Instructions will need to be requested in advance to the Powder River Ranger District. This includes changes in animal numbers, class of livestock, period of use (changes in entry or exit dates from unit to unit), or changes in pasture rotation. No changes in these instructions will be recognized without verbal or written confirmation from the Powder River Ranger District.

UPPER MEADOWS S&G ALLOTMENT

Year 2016 Annual Operating Instructions

Permitted and authorized use for year 2016:

Upper Meadows Allotment	LS Kind	LS Class	Permitted			Authorized		
			LS #	From	To	LS#	From	To
Anderson Ranch	Ewe/lamb	Mature	1200	7/1	8/31	1200	7/1	8/31
	Horse	Mature	2	7/1	8/31	2	7/1	8/31

The Leigh Creek, Upper Meadows, and Willow S&G Allotments have been combined and are separated out by pastures.

- Before Entering the Allotment

I suggest that you review your term grazing permit and the following Annual Operating Instructions, and ask questions if any portion is not clearly understood.

Year 2016 grazing fees are \$0.42/head month for sheep, and must be paid before livestock can be turned onto the Forest. Let Thad or Kerri know the date and number of livestock entering the National Forest and, upon request, provide for having stock counted.

Rotation sequence for 2016:

Pasture	2013	2014	2015	2016
Garnet	Trail in and out	Trail in and out	Trail in and out	Trail in and out
Leigh Creek	4	1	4	1
South Meadow	3	2	3	2
North Meadow	2	3	1	3
Sitting Bull Park				4
Long Park	1	4	2	4
Willow Park				5

- Entering the Allotment

Upper Meadows S&G Allotment sheep are tentatively authorized to enter the Forest July 1. This includes any trailing on National Forest. Plan to turn livestock on or after this date unless you feel that forage is not ready to be grazed, or unless you have been notified that delays are necessary to allow for further plant development. The actual date livestock may be turned onto the allotment depends on range readiness. The value of animal months lost due to a delay for forage development may be credited against next year's fees, if requested by the end of the calendar year.

Indicators to determine range readiness are soil and vegetation conditions. Rangeland is generally ready for grazing when soil has become firm after winter and early spring precipitation, and when plants have reached a stage of growth at which grazing may begin under a specific management plan without long-lasting damage. This occurs when grasses are headed out, forbs are in full bloom, and shrubs are leaved out. Livestock should not be turned on until all portions of the first pasture of a rotation are determined to be "ready", and subsequent pastures in a rotation will be "range ready" when their scheduled grazing use is to occur.

- Resource Guidelines

Resource guidelines are described in the Bighorn National Forest Vegetation Grazing Guidelines, and in the Bighorn Forest Plan. The allowable use guidelines for utilization of the current year's forage are listed in the following tables. These guidelines are applicable at the time the livestock leave the unit and include use by both livestock and wildlife.

Upper Meadows S&G Allotment is managed under a “Rotation” grazing strategy, and existing rangeland condition is considered “satisfactory”. Existing rangeland condition determinations may be revised as trend assessments are conducted.

Maximum allowable use guidelines (percent utilization by weight of forage species)		
Type Of Management	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Growing Season Long	30	10
Fall and Winter	45	15
Rotation	45	35
Deferred Rotation	50	40
Rest Rotation	50	40

Riparian Vegetation Residue Guidelines		
Season Of Use	Existing Rangeland Condition	
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Early Use Pasture Livestock leave pasture prior to 08/01	5 inches	5 inches
Summer & Fall Use Pasture Livestock leave pasture after 08/01	5 inches	7 inches
*Satisfactory is defined here as meeting or moving toward desired vegetative condition and unsatisfactory is defined as not meeting desired vegetative condition or undetermined. Vegetation residue guidelines are expressed in terms of the inches of stubble height to be left, measuring longest leaf of designated Carex species, after livestock use. In this case, all wide leaved sedges have been designated, subject to update.		

Moves between pastures are dependent upon forage utilization levels and other resource objectives being met for a pasture. When it is determined that further use and impacts in a pasture will exceed allowable use levels, livestock are required to be moved to the next pasture in the scheduled rotation, or off National Forest if they are already in the last pasture. It is your responsibility to see that livestock are managed to best utilize available forage while assuring guidelines are not exceeded. Since precipitation, forage production levels, and other factors change from year to year and livestock utilization patterns vary, this will require monitoring by you and/or your rider throughout the season.

Livestock use beyond allowable guidelines could result in an administrative action in subsequent years, such as an adjustment to the season of use, in order to allow plants a chance to recover and restore root reserves.

Sheep and sheep dogs are restricted from the area in and around Willow Park group area. The permittee and Forest Service discussed the potential for a fence around the Willow Park group area and decided to continue managing this area with herders unless management issues drive the need for a fence.

- Monitoring

The primary emphasis for monitoring should be placed on measuring stubble height in riparian areas, and estimating percent by weight of forage removed on upland sites, as described above. If issues are raised indicating the need to monitor aspen, stream banks, or willows, we prefer to jointly determine monitoring protocols and locations. Permittees are no longer required to submit annual stubble height data; however, it is strongly recommended that you continue monitoring. Any data you collect and submit will be maintained in permanent monitoring files.

To facilitate monitoring actual use, and to avoid the need to measure utilization on all Suitable rangeland, monitoring will be done using a key area concept. "Key" areas are generally those areas of a pasture which livestock have the tendency to go to and graze first. If utilization in these "key areas" does not exceed allowable utilization guidelines, then use in the rest of the unit will most likely not exceed

guidelines either. This is not to imply that guidelines need only be met in "key areas". Allowable use guidelines apply to all Suitable rangeland on the allotment. Key areas may be revised as needed.

I encourage you to contact Thad or Kerri should you have any questions, want assistance with measurements, or need monitoring forms. In order to assure your results accurately reflect livestock use, all measurements should be completed within 7 days of the time livestock are removed from the pasture. Be sure to record the date measurements are taken, and the name of the data collector(s). Photos of the transect showing its general location and actual forage remaining will support your data. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season, and I encourage your participation.

The Forest Service will be monitoring browse use of willows closely across the District this year to partition use between livestock and wildlife. It will be very important for the permittees to inform the Forest Service when livestock are going to move from one pasture to another in order for the monitoring to differentiate between wildlife and livestock use.

- Key Areas

Key areas serve as a monitoring and evaluation point for the degree of grazing use occurring in each pasture. Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives.

Key areas are as follows:

<i>Location</i>
Riparian areas along East Tensleep, Virginia, and Baby Wagon Creeks: Sections 23-27 & 13, T49N, R86W
NWSE Section 14, T49N, R86W
SWNE Section 26, T49N, R86W
NWNW Section 27, T49N, R86W
NESW Section 27, T49N, R86W
SENE Section 23, T49N, R86W

I encourage you to keep thorough notes while taking measurements and making observations during the grazing season. Should your data indicate changes might be needed in key area locations, contact Thad or Kerri to discuss adjustments.

- Maintenance of Improvements

Term grazing permits state that permittees will maintain assigned range improvements to standards of repair, orderliness, and safety acceptable to the Forest Service. A complete list of the improvements and designated maintenance responsibility is included in Part 3 of your term grazing permit. Maintenance must be completed prior to the time livestock enter the pasture in which the improvement is located each year, or in the case of allotment boundary fences, prior to livestock entering the pasture on either side of the fence. Materials from abandoned range improvements or maintenance activities must be removed from the Forest. The minimum maintenance standard for improvements is found in Part 3 of your term grazing permit.

- Planned Range Improvement Projects

There are no planned range improvement projects at this time.

- Salting Practices

The proper use of salt can be used as a management tool to help achieve proper utilization. The following guidelines must be followed when salting unless you have been given direction by a Forest Officer to do otherwise:

- a) Scatter salt in its proper location prior to livestock entering the pasture.

- b) Salt should be placed between water developments, and at least 1/4 mile from water if possible.
- c) Salt away from small parks, trails, roads, and areas of concentrated public use.
- d) Place salt in rock outcrops, mature timber stands (other than aspen), or areas of dense sagebrush.
- e) Change your salt location at least every year and preferably every time salt is placed. Moving salt at least 100 feet can prevent areas from becoming abused from salt placement year after year.
- f) Remove salt from an area when proper use is reached.

- Stock Management

- 1) Bedding Areas: Sheep must be bedded in a new location every 1-3 days to avoid leaving bed grounds with little residual vegetation and/or trampled soils.
- 2) Picketing of Horses: Horses will not be picketed within 100 feet of open water such as stream, lakes, or ponds. Picketed animals are to be moved on a regular basis to prevent exceeding allowable use standards.
- 3) General Guidelines: Sheep will be open herded. Excessive trailing and bunching of sheep should be avoided. Snow bank areas and steep, sparsely vegetated slopes should be avoided to minimize soil movement. You or any of your employees shall not use or place poison, including cyanide guns, for predator control on National Forest lands.

- Sheep Camps

Move camps as often as necessary to comply with allowable use guidelines. Excess firewood will be moved to the next campsite or scattered, and any garbage will be removed and disposed of off the National Forest. Upon request, the Forest Service will provide you with an “Extended Stay” permit for sheep camp locations needed beyond the 14 day stay limit. Permits must be for the current year and posted in a visible location on the trailer. Locations for a sheep camp near the Willow Creek Picnic area and in Sitting Bull Park will be considered and verified with the Forest Service prior to use this season.

- Wolves

On Sept. 23, 2014 the US District Court for the District of Columbia vacated the USFWS wolf delisting rule under the endangered species act. The court reinstated federal protections for Wyoming wolves that were in place prior to the 2012 delisting therefore wolves are again listed under the ESA as a nonessential experimental population in all of Wyoming. Take of wolves may be authorized only by the non-essential rules or by permit issued under section 10 of the ESA. You must contact US Fish and Wildlife Service for any wolf related predation or harassment of livestock. You can contact Mike Jimenez with USFWS or your local Wildlife Services contact. Please inform the Rangeland Management Specialist of any wolf activity on your allotment as well.

- Other

The Forest Service will be monitoring livestock use and trailing on a historic impact site in Leigh Creek S&G along the stock drive. Anderson sheep should be managed to avoid this area.

Any dead livestock shall be moved to a location greater than 200 feet from water, 500 feet from developed campgrounds, and out of view from roads or trails.

Permittees are required to abide by all Forest road restrictions and closures, as are all users of the public lands. No exceptions will be made without prior written approval.

The Upper Meadows S&G Allotment will follow management outlined in the updated Allotment Management Plan signed and dated April 25, 2016.

Documentation on the enclosed Annual Use Report is required, and will help us to plan livestock use in the future. Please make sure both on and off dates are recorded for each pasture as well as the number of cattle. Feel free to make any other pertinent management notes, as they will be helpful in determining future management decisions for the allotment. Return the Actual Use Report to the Powder River Ranger District Office by October 31, 2016.