

2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

LEADBELT ALLOTMENT

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Leadbelt Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Leadbelt Allotment and reflects information discussed during the spring meeting on April 11, 2015. Please read this information and sign the included signature page. The district ranger and current range management specialist will sign once all permittee signatures for an allotment are received. We believe that this process better represents the cooperative nature of managing these areas and indicates an understanding of the information in this document as well as the information in your term grazing permit(s). In the case of allotments running as unofficial associations, the elected president may sign for all permittees on an allotment with approval from the group.

Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependant on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with the permittees to address range condition situations that may occur due to weather related circumstances.

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Permitted</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>Season</u>
Moj Broadie	540	0	540	07/07-09/21
Rich Wootan	320	125	195	07/07-09/21
	860		735	

<u>Grazing Unit Rotation</u>	<u>Estimated Days/Dates</u>	<u>Riparian/Upland/Woody</u>
Lower Camp	2 7/7-7/8	4 in (50%) / 50% / 50%
Leadbelt	35 7/9-8/12	4 in (50%) / 50% / 50%
Horsethief/ Deer Creek	25 8/13-9/6	4 in (50%) / 50% / 50%
Upper Camp	10 9/7-9/16	4 in (50%) / 50% / 50%
Lower Camp & Sorting Pasture	5 9/17-9/21	4 in (50%) / 50% / 50%

These dates are an estimate and may vary \pm 2-5 days under normal circumstances. Moves will be authorized by Rangeland Manager based on resource conditions.

The NRCS SNOTEL sites across the Lost River Ranger District currently range from 64-90% of the Water Year average through the month of March. The Upper Big Lost River ranges from 70-80% of average and the Bear Canyon and Smiley Mountain SNOTEL sites both show 71% and 70% of average respectively. All indications show that cumulative drought impacts could persist or worsen this year. If this occurs the Forest Service expects that cattle may need to be moved more quickly through units and removed prior to the scheduled off date. Forage production is dependent on growing season (April through September) temperatures and precipitation. Even when drought conditions subside there is a lag time for plants to physically recover from the stress of the drought.

Designated Monitoring Areas(DMA's): DMA's are used to monitor representative riparian areas within a grazing unit which establishes a record of utilization and trend. The information from the DMA is also used to plan cattle moves, determine if end of season indicators are met, and to evaluate whether current management is effective or needs to be modified. Permittee monitoring, documentation and photos are encouraged before entering and when leaving each unit.

Allowable Use Standard: End-of-season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas. A patchy or uneven use pattern along the greenline will usually result in stubble height standard being met. While adequate regrowth may occur under average growing season conditions, the opposite may be true during below average growing conditions. Special attention should be given to drier weather conditions. A stubble height trigger above 4 inches is recommended in drier conditions to plan cattle moves as regrowth is limited under these conditions.

Riparian areas with greenlines dominated by Kentucky bluegrass and tufted hairgrass should also receive special attention to achieve end of season stubble height. Greenlines dominated by these plants have less bank stability than greenlines dominated by deep-rooted plants and are possibly in a lower state of ecological condition. They should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that use levels are not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus is going to be put on use levels in these areas. While all adjacent meadows should be considered, the drier meadows have less chance of regrowth and therefore are of highest concern. The upland annual use level of 50% should be used to manage the dry meadows and your rangeland management specialist will work with you to determine when a desired use level has been met, so that everyone understands what the meadows should look like after livestock use. In general, these meadows should be left with a patchy or ragged appearance to provide cover for small wildlife.

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These include prevention of stream bank trampling, increase in rate of stubble height removal, changes in grazing preference from grasses and grass-like plants to young willows and other shrubs, large groups of cattle congregating in fence corners, at gates, or in riparian areas for long periods of time.

Cleaning Grazing Units:

Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height standard being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate to clean a pasture which does not mean that livestock are to remain in a pasture past the move date without prior approval from Forest personnel. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean. Range riders should keep permittees informed of problems cleaning grazed units. Frequent back-riding indicates there is a herd management problem. It is also the permittee's responsibility to correct problems caused by drift from other units.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment; interior fences should also be maintained prior cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements.

Responsibility for fence maintenance was determined at the November 15, 2002 meeting with the Leadbelt permittees. The rider will maintain all fences for the allotment prior to cattle entering the unit following the above listed agreement. If you need a copy of this agreement, please contact our office.

All current water troughs and associated spring fences need to be maintained according to the standards in your term grazing permits.

Any projects may require travel of motorized vehicles off of designated routes in order to transport materials to the construction site need authorization **IN ADVANCE**. Without this documentation you could be cited by law enforcement for travel plan violations.

Weed Free Hay: In accordance with State Law, please ensure that range riders bring hay that is certified and tagged noxious weed free.

Grazing Fees: The grazing fees for the 2015 season are \$1.69/head month. Your grazing fee payment will need to be received prior to turning livestock out on the National Forest. Receipt of payment could take up to 2 weeks from the date payment is sent.

Response to Predators: Should predator issues arise on the allotment, please contact your range management specialist and Idaho Fish & Game or Wildlife Services with the information. Coordination with permittees and all agencies listed above is important to assess predator issues and share information on predator management decisions on National Forest administered lands and those areas adjacent to National Forest.

Actual Use Report: An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you upon completion of the grazing season. This form is to be completed and returned to the Lost River Ranger District in a timely manner. The Association President will need to provide a consolidated report with the numbers and dates when cattle entered the allotment, moved from unit to unit, and when all cattle were removed from the allotment. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their cattle entered and left the allotment. This information is used for the purpose of evaluating and analyzing grazing allotment and grazing unit use, compliance with annual operating instructions/term grazing permits, and planning next season's grazing management strategy.

NEPA and Allotment Management Plans (AMP): Our office is in the process of completing an environmental analysis and documentation for livestock grazing in the Leadbelt Allotment and four others in the Antelope Creek drainage. Permittees will need to work closely with your rangeland management specialist and other Forest personnel to develop a proposed action for grazing management in conjunction with a long term grazing management strategy (AMP) for your allotment.

This work will include taking a hard look at historic and existing grazing activities to determine whether current management is adequate to comply with the Forest Plan and other laws and regulations that govern the management of public lands. This process will include several meetings with permittees to discuss and agree on feasible and appropriate management goals and monitoring objectives on the allotment that will meet or move us toward the desired conditions for multiple resources on the allotment.

One example of this would be reviewing maps and other existing information on water developments to determine the functionality as livestock water and/or the necessity of converting stock ponds to troughs to provide adequate water while protecting the integrity of the spring source for wildlife, water and soil resources. We plan to include adjustments to your allotment boundary and construction of a boundary fence between Horsethief Creek and Antelope Creek drainages in this decision. Other fence issues should also be discussed. The ultimate goal of this analysis is to determine the existing condition and trend of those areas most likely to be affected by livestock grazing and develop a plan to minimize impacts through best management practices

for livestock grazing. Your participation in development of the proposed action and AMP are crucial to the success of your operation and our long term management of the area.

Applications for refunds/credits for unused portions of your allotment must be requested and filed separately. Please contact our office if you need an application for refund/credit.

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the District Rangeland Management Specialist at 208-588-3400.

