



Wisconsin grassland bird populations are in steep decline. Many of these species, like the bobolink and eastern meadowlark, nest on the ground therefore are vulnerable to grazing cattle and mower blades.

Livestock producers can take steps to improve nest success in pastures and hayfields! See below for a few simple options.

Nests are vulnerable from April 25 to August 1

Best practices to improve nest success during this time include:

Rotational or Continuous Grazing + Hay

- Create unharvested **nesting refuge**:
 - Away from woods or hedgerows
 - As large as possible (20-30% of pasture area is ideal)
 - Don't harvest until August 1
- Harvest hay or graze after August 1 → expect some yield loss

Continuous Grazing

- Use **low stocking rate**, ideally ≤ 0.5 head/acre (1 head = 1,000 lbs)

Rotational Grazing

- Rotate to next paddock when pasture **plant height** (residual) is **8+ inches**
- Use long **rest interval** between grazing events, ideally **40+ days** (to allow for a complete a nesting cycle)
- Graze **every other paddock** to ensure some protective cover near nests

Tips for bird- friendly grazing

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For more info find *Grassland Birds: Fostering Habitat Using Rotational Grazing* in the UW Extension Learning Store or contact Laura Judge, ljudge@wisc.edu

