

## Post Restoration Management Years 1 - 2

The first two years of management are critical to the establishment of new wild flower meadows. After autumn sowing you will get both autumn and spring germination. Many seeds need a period of cold weather to kick start their germination such as Yellow rattle & Cowslips. In most cases\* you ideally will want to keep the grass short <10cm for the first full year after sowing. This should help maintain some bare ground and suppress the grass enough to improve the establishment of the wild flower seedlings.



Restoration in Early March After Restoration

### Was Yellow rattle in your seed mix or green hay?

You will need to remove livestock at the first signs of yellow rattle germination. This could be anytime from late February to March, depending on the weather. If livestock are left grazing any later, they could eat out all the Yellow rattle seedlings, which will stop them doing their job of growing and suppressing the grass.

**Tip:** You will need to be in your meadow regularly during February and March to look for the first signs of yellow rattle.



Yellow Rattle Seedling

\*This may not be necessary if grass is less dominant on your site, if so graze until late Feb or early March, then manage as a traditional hay meadow.

# Is Your Grass Filling the Gaps?

## Keep it short throughout first year or two

Autumn is getting increasingly warm and wet in the UK. This means grass that was scarified or harrowed before seeding will rapidly grow back and start to fill the bare ground created. If grass is allowed to re-grow unhindered it will smother the small seedlings as they emerge. If you're managing with livestock, they will need removing once Yellow rattle has germinated. If managing with cutting, you can continue to cut throughout the growing season, but set the mower high enough so as not to damage the Yellow Rattle.

Best

### Grazing (with Yellow rattle)

If Yellow rattle is present in your seed mix or green hay it is recommended you keep the livestock on your field through the autumn and winter until you see the first signs of Yellow rattle germinating in the early spring. This can make a big difference by keeping gaps in the sward open long enough for the wild flowers to germinate and grow. It is hard to provide exact timings and stocking rates for grazing. It's important to aim to keep the grass short (<10cm). You could start with a low stocking rate and observe the effects of grazing on the grass and wild flower seedlings. Then either increase or remove stock when you start to see damage to the newly planted seedlings or the field starts to get poached. You will need to monitor the effects of grazing carefully and remove them at the first signs of Yellow rattle, as it's very palatable to livestock. Keeping the grass short will give the wild flowers the best start.



Sward Length, Late Winter

### Flail Collector

If grazing is not available, repeated light mowing may be enough to suppress the grass or annual weeds during this first year. Ideally mowing with a flail collector set high enough so as not to cut the Yellow rattle is best. This should stop the grass smothering the wild flower seedlings. Removing the cuttings will help to keep the sward open and allow more light into the establishing wild flowers.



Flail Collector

Worst

### Topping

Topping may also be an option if grazing or a flail collector is not available. It's best to cut little and often during the growing season. Avoid cutting too low, as this may damage the emerging yellow rattle and other wild flower seedlings.

## Post Restoration Management Timetable

Timing	Arable Reversion	Grassland Enhancement
Sept - Oct	Sow seeds	Sow seeds
<b>Post Restoration Management</b>		
Oct - March (year 1-2)	Keep grass short (<10cm) by regular mowing, removing cuttings if feasible	Keep grass short (<10cm) by grazing or mowing, removing cuttings if feasible.
<b>Year 2*</b>		
April to June/July	Control annual weeds by topping, pulling or spot-treating perennial weeds. If Yellow rattle is present, don't close mow (<10cm) before Yellow rattle has set seed (normally mid July)	
July to Sept	Mow or lightly graze the sward to 5-10cm for the remainder of the growing season	

\* If conditions permit, proceed immediately to the regime indicated for year 3

Year 3 onwards	Establish the future management regime, either traditional hay meadow or permanent pasture	
	Hay Meadow	Grazed Pasture
	Cut for hay in late July or early August, grazing or mowing the aftermath through the autumn and winter, ground conditions permitting.	The main grazing period should be from late summer to autumn winter, with optional light spring grazing.

## Examples of Wild flower Seedlings



Sward in March Following Restoration



Common Knapweed Seedling



Buttercup Seedling



Eyebright Seedling



Yellow Rattle Seedling