

# Livestock grazing management compatible with nesting greater sage-grouse

October 13 2017

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A new study published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* looks at whether management of livestock grazing may help protect sagebrush and birds that depend on it.

The extent of sagebrush in western North America has declined significantly in recent years, which has resulted in concomitant effects on an array of wildlife, such as nesting greater [sage-grouse](#), a species that is highly sensitive to disturbances and has been at the center of a historic conservation effort. Scientists assessed the effects of rotational grazing management and rest from grazing on daily survival rates of nearly 500 sage-grouse nests monitored over 6 years in central Montana.

Nest success was similar among the different grazing management systems examined and there was no evidence that rest from grazing (?12 months) increased daily survival rates of nesting sage-grouse. Furthermore, rotational grazing systems and rest had negligible effects on vegetation height and cover relative to other grazing strategies used in the study area.

U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke recently ordered a review of current sage grouse management plans, saying he wanted to balance the bird's conservation with local economic growth. The review task force recommended relaxing rules related to grazing [management](#).

The authors noted that the foremost [conservation](#) priority should be the prevention of further loss and fragmentation of [sagebrush](#) landscapes

from land uses and activities that negatively affect sage-grouse populations.

"The biggest take-away from our study was that there's more than one way to manage livestock grazing in a way that's compatible with nesting sage-grouse," said Joe Smith, lead author of the study.

**More information:** Joseph T. Smith et al, Effects of rotational grazing management on nesting greater sage-grouse, *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (2017). [DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.21344](https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.21344)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Livestock grazing management compatible with nesting greater sage-grouse (2017, October 13) retrieved 9 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-10-livestock-grazing-compatible-greater-sage-grouse.html>

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