



Renewable Energy Siting & Engagement for Tomorrow (RESET)

Solar Grazing Checklist

Why graze solar fields?

Having sheep graze under solar panels can manage vegetation and give farmers new ways to earn income, while reducing concerns about farmland loss.

This dual-use idea is called agrivoltaics or solar grazing. Sheep grazing lets solar site operators partner with local farmers, usually at no additional cost compared to mowing. For solar grazing to work well, farmers and solar site managers need to consider each other's requirements for construction and operation.

Farmers and solar site managers

Key steps for a successful solar grazing system

- ☐ Agree on perimeter fencing needs and gate locations for sheep management
- ☐ Have a combined orientation and basic safety training with the operations and maintenance crew and farmers
- ☐ Agree in writing where, how, and who will fence off or protect things that sheep might damage
- ☐ Agree on how to notify each other about and record planned and unplanned visits
- ☐ Decide how to provide water
- ☐ Plan paddocks so solar workers can do their jobs easily
- ☐ Confirm paddock, mineral, and water layout
- ☐ Work together to choose a sheep-friendly seed mix and site design, if possible
- ☐ No pesticides without permission from the other party
- ☐ Agree on the maximum plant height and other vegetation management needs
- ☐ Consider starting with a one year lease with the option to continue



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Solar Site Manager Tips

- ☐ Avoid damaging, removing, or importing soil during construction, including by grading and compaction, and leave topsoil on top
- ☐ Cover or secure wires so sheep can't reach them
- ☐ Allow temporary electric fences for grazing management
- ☐ Give the farmer 24/7 access and design the site to optimize sheep management
- ☐ Give the farmer a map of areas sheep cannot go
- ☐ Update your insurance if needed
- ☐ Introduce other site managers and partners to the farmer
- ☐ Get a clear cost estimate and sample contract

Farmer Tips

- ☐ Confirm your insurance covers grazing on a solar site
- ☐ Confirm how you'll bring vehicles and sheep in and out
- ☐ Offer a short guide¹ for solar workers on how to act around sheep
- ☐ Put up signs: "Sheep inside, close gates, don't feed sheep, call this number."
- ☐ Develop a grazing plan with help from your Extension educator or a consultant if needed
- ☐ Decide how to provide water and where to put feed or minerals
- ☐ Tell the solar company if you'll have a dog or other animals
- ☐ Choose a contract² type and fee structure
- ☐ Share your plan with the site manager, including what dates sheep will be onsite, the number of sheep, and how the paddocks, food and water will be laid out
- ☐ If on your land, share locations of utilities, gates, and other infrastructure to help operator design the site
- ☐ Tell the site operator immediately if there is a significant change in your plan

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Resources

- American Solar Grazing Association: solargrazing.org
- Sample guide¹ and grazing contract²: solargrazing.org/contract
- Sheep on the Go: goatsonthego.com/solar-grazing
- Pasture Seeds: GrassWorks lists pasture seed dealers from Wisconsin: tinyurl.com/grassworksgrazing and Ernst Seeds has solar grazing seed mixes that include pollinator species: ernstseed.com
- Digital version of this checklist: go.wisc.edu/solargrazing



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This factsheet was adapted from the Solar Grazing Checklist for Shepherds and Solar Site Managers developed by Alex DePillis at the Vermont Dept. of Agriculture.

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