

PREScribed FIRE FOR PRAIRIE RANCHERS



Canadian Prairies
**PREScribed
FIRE EXCHANGE**
www.grasslandfire.ca

WHY USE PRESCRIBED FIRE?

Prescribed fire can be a valuable tool in grassland management. When planned and conducted correctly, fire provides multiple agricultural and ecological benefits:

- **Improves Forage Quality & Quantity:** Fire stimulates new plant growth, increases palatability, and boosts nutrient content for livestock grazing.
- **Controls Invasive Species & Woody Encroachment:** Fire helps manage invasive plants and suppresses encroaching shrubs and trees.
- **Promotes Native Grassland Health:** Many native prairie species are fire-adapted and respond positively to periodic burning.
- **Improves Wildlife Habitat:** Fire restores habitat structure and diversity for grassland birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.
- **Pasture Uniformity and Livestock Distribution:** Burning can be used to encourage even grazing distribution across a pasture or it can be strategically used to attract livestock to certain areas of the pasture where they normally don't visit or draw them away from riparian areas, to increase regrowth.



Top: Aberdeen Municipal Pasture post-burn (June 5, 2025), the fresh regrowth by the water was burned the previous fall, while the area across the road was outside of the burn area. Bottom: Practitioners helping with the prescribed fire on the pasture (October 23, 2024).

PLANNING A SAFE, EFFECTIVE PRESCRIBED BURN

Conducting a prescribed fire requires **detailed planning, training, and coordination**. Here's what you need:

1. Develop a Burn Plan

- Define clear objectives (e.g., reduce tree and shrub cover, target invasive species).
- Map the burn unit and establish fireguards or control lines.
- Assess fuel conditions, topography, and weather trends.
- Establish acceptable prescription weather parameters (wind, temperature, humidity).
- Plan for required personnel, equipment, communications, and emergencies.

2. Get Trained

- All participants should receive prescribed fire training.
- Join training events and courses through organizations like the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE).
- Understand fire behavior, suppression techniques, and safety protocols.

3. Communicate

- Notify neighbours, local fire departments, and Rural Municipalities / Counties in advance.
- Receive any necessary permits from local municipalities to conduct a prescribed fire
- Check for local fire bans or restrictions before ignition.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS ON SASKATCHEWAN CROWN LAND

If your prescribed burn is on Crown land or leased Crown land, you must comply with The Wildfire Act and associated regulations:

Resource Management Burn Plans (RMBPs) are Required

- Start the planning process at least 4 months in advance.
- Submit a detailed Resource Management Burn Plan to the Ministry of Agriculture and Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) for approval
- The plan must include:
 - Objectives and ecological rationale
 - Maps of the area
 - Weather and fuel conditions
 - Fire control strategies
 - Risk mitigation measures.

Approval Is Mandatory

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency must review and approve the RMBP before any ignition takes place on Crown lands.
- Unauthorized burning on Crown lands can result in fines or legal action.

Fire is a natural process—and a powerful tool. When done safely and legally, prescribed fire supports healthy grasslands, sustainable livestock production, and resilient prairie ecosystems.

For more information or burn plan templates, contact the

Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange at cppfe@meewasin.com or visit www.grasslandfire.ca for more information.

- In **Saskatchewan**, all prescribed fires must be reported to the Saskatchewan Control Burn Line prior to ignition and once the fire is complete. The number is **1-866-404-4911**.
- In **Alberta**, all prescribed fires in the Green Zone must be reported to the Alberta Wildfire at **310-FIRE (3473)**
- In **Manitoba**, the Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development administers the Crop Residue Burning Program and issues permits. The number is **204-745-5646**.

UNDERSTANDING LIABILITY

Liability is a serious consideration when using fire:

- You are legally responsible for any damage or fire escape that occurs from your prescribed burn.
- Ensure your burn is within the prescribed weather conditions and control measures are in place.
- It is strongly recommended to:
 - Carry liability insurance that covers prescribed burns
 - Keep thorough records of your planning and conditions
 - Follow your burn plan exactly

In the case of an escape:

- You may be liable for suppression costs and damages to neighbouring properties or public lands.
- Under The Wildfire Act, civil or criminal charges may apply if negligence is found.



PREScribed FIRE CHECKLIST

1. Have a clear ecological or agricultural objective
2. Prepare a written burn plan
3. Take or attend prescribed fire training
4. Notify RMs, neighbours and local fire authorities
5. Follow the Saskatchewan Wildfire Act for Crown land burns
6. Burn only under favorable weather conditions
7. Carry liability insurance.
8. Document your process and follow your plan.

RESOURCES

- Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (grasslandfire.ca)
- Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (saskpublicsafety.ca)
- Saskatchewan Wildfire Act and Regulations
- Your local RM office - for bylaws, fire bands and local burn notifications