NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES


Rhododendron


Japanese knotweed


Giant hogweed


Self-sown conifer


Himalayan balsam


Himalayan knotweed


Gunnera

Please talk to your project team with regard to invasive species control.

The appropriate action will depend on the scale of the problem.

VEGETATION STRUCTURE - grazed field only

Uniform grass dominated vegetation of even height. Can indicate over or under grazing.


Uniform rank vegetation structure, indicating under-grazing.

Poor structure: Short *OR* rank throughout with limited variation.

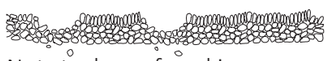
Moderate structure: >50% sward is short with tall patches *OR* 50-75% is tall sward with litter present.

Good structure: Sward is of medium height throughout with positive indicators flowering. Areas of taller and shorter vegetation also occur.

FIELD BOUNDARY

Condition of dry stone wall:

POOR


Not stockproof, and in early stages of dereliction


Derelict

MODERATE


Signs of advancing or potential deterioration

GOOD


Stockproof and in excellent condition


Sound and stockproof with minor defects

Condition of hedgerow:

Farmer Actions

Non Productive Investments (NPIs) and Landscape Actions (LAs) are a list of actions farmers can select from **to help improve the environmental quality of their land and improve their habitat quality.**

Each farmer has a budget available for farm actions for each year of the scheme.

Examples of NPIs include fencing, drinkers, wild bird cover, planting new hedgerows and planting riparian margins.

Landscape actions are larger actions that may require more time/expertise from the project team, *such as foot bridges, peatland restoration, or invasive species control.*

Farmers can work with their advisor/project team to submit these actions each year.

Field boundary assessment thresholds

Poor: Wire fences. Narrow, low, gappy hedgerows. Poorly vegetated earth banks. Drainage ditches damaged by livestock/vehicles with few aquatic plants and/or algal growth. Unmaintained stone walls with no lichens/mosses. Treelines with non-native conifers only.

Moderate: Hedgerows <2m wide & >1.5m tall. Occasional gaps along the base, 'A' shape & 2/3 native species. Grassy earth banks & drainage ditches (little damage from fording/drinking). Maintained stone walls with poor lichen/moss cover. Mature, native-dominated Treelines.

Good: Hedgerows >2m wide & >1.8m tall with few gaps, varied structure & 'A' shape throughout. 3+ native species. Earth banks with flowering plants / broadleaved herbs / thick vegetation. Drainage ditches with aquatic flora & no damage. Stone walls with abundant lichens / mosses. Mature, native-only treelines.

Tips for habitat management

GRASSLAND HABITAT

Grasslands are important for nature and biodiversity, providing a habitat for many varieties of flora and fauna. Ireland has the highest proportion of grassland in Europe with 72% of the total land area used for agriculture, 80% of which is grassland.

Benefits of semi natural grasslands:

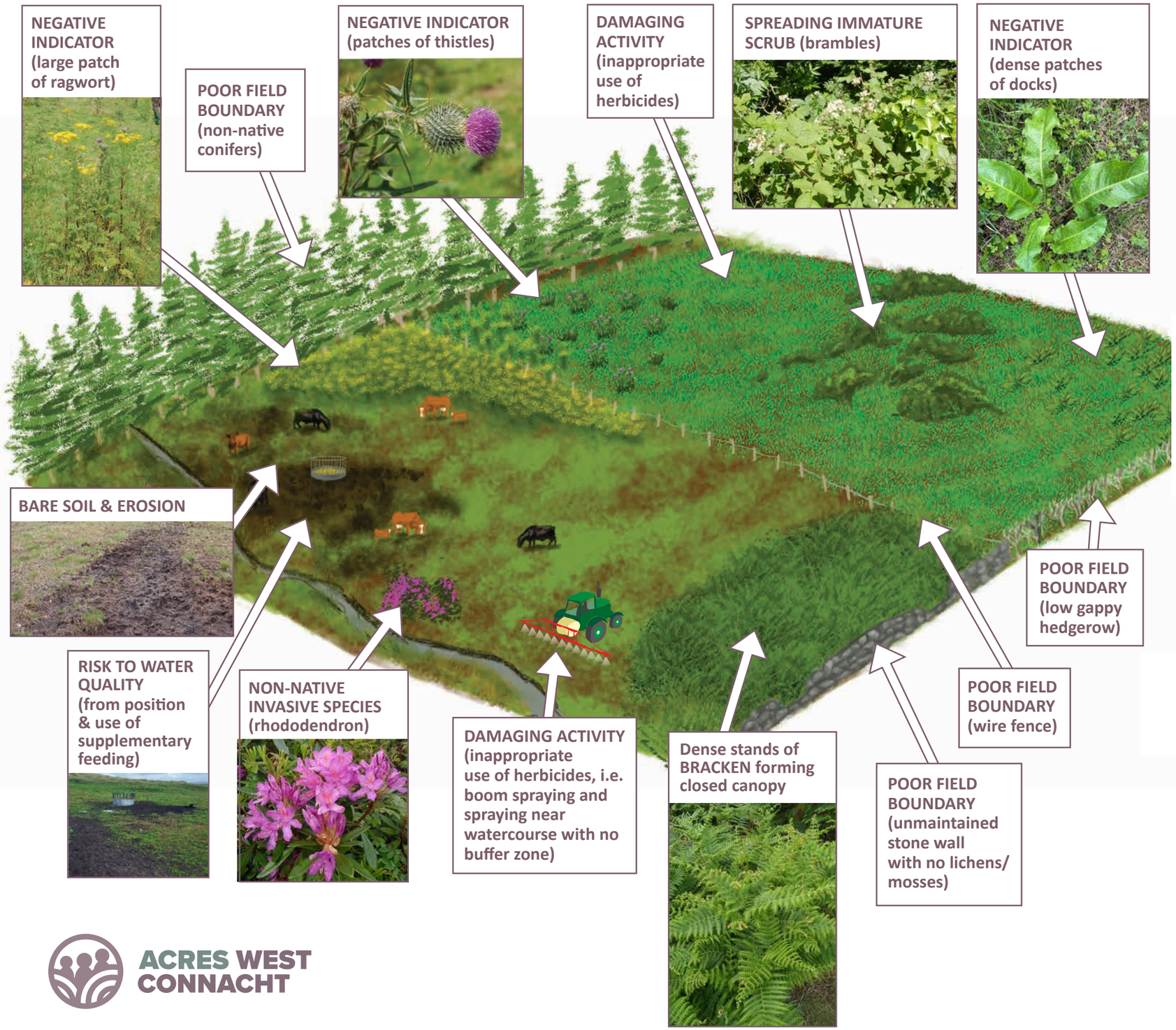
- Semi natural grasslands have a higher resilience to drought and flooding because of their higher plant diversity.
- Provide a varied habitat for numerous plant and animal species.
- Varied plants provide a more balanced nutrient intake for grazing livestock.

This booklet illustrates common threats and pressures and provides tips on how to maximise the health and productivity of your grassland, and give rise to increased habitat scores and associated payments.

ACRES WEST CONNACHT

Tips for habitat management

GRASSLAND HABITAT
THREATS & PRESSURES



Management tips:

Negative Indicators, creeping thistle, docks and nettles can be hard to control. Spot spraying, topping or strimming may help to control depending on the coverage.

Reduce nutrients input. This will allow more positive species to thrive. High nutrient levels can increase amount of thistles and nettles in plot.

Grazing at appropriate levels and with suitable stock type for the habitat, for example cattle grazing in spring/early summer to help open sward in rushy areas.

Consider mowing later to allow as many species as possible to flower and set seed.

Reseeding grasslands can impact negatively on your ACRES score.

Feed hay or concentrates rather than silage to overwintering stock, to reduce the risk of excessive nutrients or weeds being introduced to the grassland.

Establishing riparian zones next to watercourses can help improve water quality & biodiversity.

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