

(9) EXCELLENT WILDLIFE HABITAT:

Contour grass strips planted on terrace ridges will increase escape cover and the amount of habitat "edge" tremendously. This edge will improve the quality of wildlife habitat substantially, particularly for edge-loving species such as pheasants and quail. Grass strips will be particularly valuable for wildlife if switchgrass is the dominant grass species and if forbs and legumes are included in the seeding mix - since these help provide critical brood habitat and enhance stand vigor.

ii. Chemical drift isn't a serious problem either. The native warm-season grasses most useful for contour grass strips, especially switchgrass, can tolerate a moderate amount of herbicide and be just fine. Of course, you don't want to spray grass strips directly, but a little drift onto them isn't a serious concern.

CONTOUR GRASS STRIPS

- Wheat
- Row Crop
- Fallow
- Grass Strips



(10) EASY TO FARM:

If you're already farming along the contour, adding contour grass strips, either on terraces or on their own, should add no more difficulty to your operations. Actually, grassing terrace ridges can make your farming easier since width of the grass strips can be varied to minimize point rows. You can also avoid the difficulty of maneuvering large implements on the terraces. Have you ever had the problem of keeping one end of your combine header out of the dirt while cutting terrace ridges? Grass your terraces and forget

10 GOOD REASONS TO GRASS YOUR TERRACES

If you take advantage of the Continuous Signup of CRP, by installing a few acres of Contour Grass Strips on several terrace ridges in each field, you can turn your farm into a model of soil, water, and wildlife conservation and potentially increase your profits at the same time. Conservation benefits can be even further enhanced by alternating crops between contour grass strips using your preferred crop rotation.

If you farm level land take advantage of similar benefits provided by the sister practice called *Cross Wind Trap Strips*, also available as part of the Continuous Signup.

For More Information, Contact Your Local NRCS District Conservationist or:

Natural Resources Conservation Service
1010 E. 17th, Hays, KS 67601 (785) 925-2528

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
1424 Hwy. 183 AL, P.O. Box 338, Hays, KS 67601 (785) 626-8414

107 Layton, Dodge City, KS 67801 (316) 227-2392

1001 W. 34th Street, Dodge City, KS 67801 (316) 227-8609

A relatively new feature of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is the "Continuous Signup" offered through your local USDA Service Center. One of the best practices for western Kansas available through the Continuous Signup is the Contour Grass Strip. These grass-and-legume strips can be installed on existing terrace ridges or along the contours on unterraced land, creating a series of valuable benefits for soil, water, and wildlife conservation, as well as for crop production. Here are 10 important ways these 20 to 50 foot grass strips can benefit your farming operation.



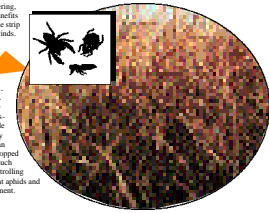
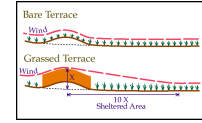


(1) EROSION CONTROL:
 Earth terraces do little to stop wind erosion. When still-stemmed, tall grasses like switchgrass and little bluestem are established on terrace ridges, these grassed strips form barriers that prevent the wind from uprooting precious topsoil. Their soil-forming roots also strengthen the terrace, protecting it from being washed out during heavy downpours.

(2) KEEPING SNOW ON THE FIELD:
 Because grassed terraces reduce the wind at ground level, they will stop snow on the field where it can benefit your crops. Since snow is efficiently stored in the soil profile, it can substantially improve subsequent grain yields, if it is trapped on the field. High wind easily blows snow off green wheat and even off fields where moderate crop residue is present. Grassed terraces will capture this snow, reducing drifting on roads and into livestock corrals and farmsteads.

(3) CROP SHELTERING:
 Persistent winds on the Great Plains not only increase evaporation from the soil surface but cause crops to lose excessive moisture through their leaves. By slowing the wind at ground level, grassed terraces can reduce this moisture loss, allowing young crops downward to channel more moisture into growth. This gives young plants greater opportunity to develop deeper roots so they can tap additional water. By grassing terrace ridges, you can also reduce mechanical damage to young plants caused by wind-borne soil particles or the wind itself. Crop sheltering, snow catchment, and erosion control benefits are greatest where the orientation of the strip is nearly perpendicular to prevailing winds.

(4) BENEFICIAL ARTHROPODS:
 Studies have shown that many beneficial insects and other predatory arthropods need permanent cover, especially grasses, to survive the winter. By grassing your terrace ridges, you can provide places where these species, particularly beetles, spiders, and parasitic wasps can winter. This allows them to re-enter cropped areas sooner and in greater numbers. Such beneficial species are important in controlling pests like greenbugs and Russian wheat aphids and are crucial for integrated pest management.



(5) NO MORE REBUILDING TERRACES:
 The soil-forming roots of tall grasses will bind the terrace ridge tightly and, for all practical purposes, ensure that it will not erode away. By creating organic matter and trapping wind-borne soil particles, a grassed terrace may even increase slightly in height over time. Since you're not out there rebuilding terraces, you save fuel and time, and reduce equipment wear and tear.

(6) TERRACE RIDGES DON'T PRODUCE THE BEST CROPS:
 Since terrace ridges are more exposed to the wind and rain tend to run off them, crops planted on terrace ridges in western Kansas often yield less than adjacent parts of the field. This is especially evident in years with below average precipitation. This makes the terrace ridge an ideal site to take out of crop production since farming them may be less profitable.

(7) INCREASED YIELDS / MAINTAINED PROFITS:
 Research has shown that the above benefits, especially snow catchment and crop sheltering, can modestly increase yields in adjacent crops. This yield increase can compensate for the fact that slightly less acreage is being farmed. When you consider all the enhancements or savings outlined above, a commitment to conservation represented by grassed contour strips may cost little or nothing and gain a lot for your farming operation.

(8) AUTOMATIC CRP ELIGIBILITY / GUARANTEED INCOME:
 The conservation benefits provided by grassed contour strips are so outstanding, with so little reduction in actual farmed land, that the USDA will automatically accept suitable lands for this practice into CRP through the Continuous Signup, regardless of soil type. Unlike regular CRP, there is no specific signup period and no bidding process. Whenever you're ready, acreage you offer for contour grass strips can be accepted at prevailing rental rates established for your area and soil type. Since cropping profits will likely be maintained, CRP rental payments should net added income for your operation that you'll miss without grass contour strips. These strips may also be grazed incidental to grazing crop residue, with approval from your local FSA County Committee and a 25% payment reduction for the CRP acres affected.