

Our Living Landscape

Grassland Topic

Notes to Accompany Introductory Video



We have the perfect climate in the South West for growing grass as it is mild and wet.

Grass grows naturally and much of the grassland in the South West is **permanent pasture**: this means it hasn't been ploughed for many years. This is really good for the soil as it helps to build up **organic matter** (decomposed or broken-down plants and animals). Organic matter stores carbon in the soil and helps to reduce **global warming**.

A farmer uses this grass to graze their cattle and sheep. These **ruminant** animals are able to use the grass to produce meat and milk. Some of this permanent grassland produces a rich **ecosystem** of grasses and herbs supporting a wide range of **invertebrates**, small mammals and birds.

On most livestock farms, where cows require a lot of good quality grass, fields are provided with additional **nutrients**. These are spread on the field and might come from: artificial **fertilizer**, bought by the farmer; home-produced **manure**, that comes out of the back end of a cow, mixed with straw that the cows have been bedded up on in the winter; and/or **slurry** (a liquid waste usually made from cow manure and water). Organic farmers can only use these natural fertilizers (manure and slurry). Beef cattle and sheep also **recycle** their manure in the grazing fields, where it helps the grass to grow.

In the winter it is cold and wet so not suitable for grazing as the cattle will trample the ground and damage the soil, and grass doesn't grow in cold temperatures. Therefore, in the colder months, dairy and beef cattle are usually kept undercover and fed on **hay** or **silage** made from grass cut and preserved when it was abundant in early summer. Sheep are lighter and therefore often remain outside most of the year round.

Grazing animals have helped to create the landscape in the South West of England. This **landscape** is famous for its patchwork of fields with their hedges which keep the livestock in the field and provide a safe haven and food for wild animals and birds. Some of these field boundaries are very ancient, dating back to pre-history i.e. over 4,000 years ago.

Useful Websites

- www.cornwallfoodandfarming.net
- www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk
- www.royalcornwallshow.org/education/
- www.thisisdairyfarming.com