


What To Do Around Cattle

Animals grazing in the parks can come with some trade-offs for visitors. In the rainy season, cattle can cause damage to trails, making the ground muddy and unpleasant to walk through. Cows also produce manure, requiring visitors to remain aware while on the trails. Cattle are also large animals and, while not aggressive by nature, can respond in a potentially dangerous manner if startled or threatened.

Here is what to do when around cattle in the parks:

- **Leash Your Dog.** Per Ordinance 38, dogs are required to be on leash in areas where grazing animals are present. Cattle don't always differentiate between dogs and coyotes, and can become agitated, creating unsafe conditions for dogs, cattle and humans. Protect yourself, your pets, and cattle by keeping your dog on leash around cattle.
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- **Give Cattle Distance.** If cattle are blocking the trail, approach slowly, speak normally, and allow them time to move away. If possible, walk around cattle or go off-trail if necessary.
 - **Leave Calves Alone.** Do not get close, touch, or pet them. Cows are protective of their calves. If a calf appears to be alone, the mother cow is usually nearby and will return to care for it soon. Interfering can result in the death of the calf.
 - **Close Pedestrian Gates Behind You.** Leaving pedestrian gates open is the primary cause of livestock being where they are not wanted. Vehicle gates should be left as they are found – open or closed.

East Bay

Regional Park District

2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605
1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)
ebparks.org

About the Park District

The East Bay Regional Park District is a two-county special district with more than 125,000 acres of parkland in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The Park District's mission is to preserve open space and native species, and provide educational and recreational opportunities for area residents.



More Grazing Information

More Grazing Information:



To learn more information about grazing and the important role that it plays in protecting the parks and environment, visit ebparks.org/grazing.

Reporting an Incident:

If you encounter a cow that is aggressive, sick, injured, or dead, note the location and report it to park staff. Contact 510-881-1833.



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Why Parks are Grazed in the East Bay Regional Park District



Loren Klein

Why Parks Are Grazed

Grazing animals have been part of the **ecosystem** of this region for many tens of thousands of years. The native flora of the East Bay evolved under the influence of prehistoric herbivores, such as mammoths, ground sloths, horses, and camels and historic grazers, such as deer, elk, and antelope as well as other common disturbances such as wildfire and drought.

Over the past 200 years, California grasslands have largely become dominated by invasive, nonnative, annual grasses.

Today, conservation grazing plays an important role in reducing wildfire risks and maintaining a healthy ecosystem for native plants and wildlife. Over 86,800 acres of parkland are grazed annually by cattle, sheep, or goats, mostly during the winter and early spring months. Conservation grazing is a practical and economical tool to manage our grasslands.

The Park District has over 60 years of experience using grazing as a resource management tool. Park staff and resource ecologists constantly evaluate and monitor grazing practices and make changes to balance resource management with an enjoyable experience for park visitors.

Benefits of Grazing

Maintains Healthy Grassland Ecosystems

Conservation grazing helps maintain a healthy grassland ecosystem. Without grazing, grassland areas would be replaced by weedy, undesirable plants, and in some cases will become coyote brush dominated scrublands. Conservation grazing also reduces the cover of annual grasses, which allows for new plant growth like wildflowers and native grasses.

Supports Habitat Diversity for Wildlife

Well-managed conservation grazing increases habitat diversity. Many species, including endangered ones, depend on grasslands for their livelihood. California ground squirrels occur widely within grazed grasslands and develop burrow systems. The protected California tiger salamander and the California red-legged frog, along with western burrowing owls, San Joaquin kit fox, and American badgers, all rely on these burrows. Plus, the prey found in grazed areas support the foraging needs of predators like bobcats and golden eagles. Additionally, stockponds used for livestock watering support critical breeding habitat for native amphibians.

Vital to Wildfire Protection

Grazing cattle play an important role in wildfire protection by reducing flammable vegetation and fire risks. Conservation grazing helps reduce fire hazard by controlling the amount and distribution of grasses and other potential fuel. While cattle grazing helps reduce flammable vegetation in grasslands areas, goats and sheep are used around urban settings, in conjunction with human work crews and prescribed burns, to create fuel breaks – a proactive effort to minimize future wildfires.

Grazing programs have been shown to reduce fire intensity and slow the rate of spread, giving firefighters a fighting chance to combat fires. Conservation grazing also helps prevent grasslands from transitioning into shrublands, which contain more flammable vegetation and higher wildfire risks.

