

REQUIREMENTS FOR AGRICULTURAL STATUS

There are four ways in which the land can be used in order to receive agricultural classification:

- As a farm – a parcel of land used to produce agricultural products that originate from the land’s productivity for the primary purpose of obtaining a monetary profit. Examples of this would be planting and harvesting wheat, oats, barley, etc. or cutting, baling and selling hay that is either native or supplemented with seed.
- As a ranch – a parcel of land which is used for grazing livestock for the primary purpose of obtaining a monetary profit. “Livestock” means domestic animals, which are used for food for human or animal consumption, breeding, drafting or profit. Pleasure horses are not considered as use for obtaining agricultural status. Horses used for breeding or as workhorses can be considered part of an agricultural operation, if the operation is substantial rather than a hobby. Pigs and chickens are not grazing animals.
- As Forest Management - this is accomplished through the Colorado Department of Forestry for parcels of 40 acres or more. The intent is to maintain healthy forests and animal environments through selective harvesting and planting, guided by a written plan worked out with the Department of Forestry. Contact John Twitchell, District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service, Steamboat Springs District, PO Box 773657, Steamboat Springs, CO, 80477, (970) 879-0475. He must approve and oversee any forest plan for agricultural classification each year. However, the Assessor, not the state forest service, makes classification decisions.
- As a Conservation Easement – a parcel of 40 acres or more (80 if a residence exists on the land) can be put into a conservation easement with several land trust agencies. The land must be classified agricultural prior to acquiring the easement.

When determining if land is being used as a farm or ranch, the key words are “for the primary purpose of obtaining a monetary profit”. Raising a few animals as a hobby and growing crops for your own use do not qualify. The agricultural activity must be the primary use of the land. “Trespass Grazing” is a circumstance that happens all over the county. It is grazing of livestock on private property without a written lease and no exchange of compensation. It is not to be considered as use toward obtaining agricultural status.

When a landowner requests agricultural status, the land must be used as a farm or ranch for three consecutive years before the tax classification can be changed. The classification can be changed in the third year. It is preferable for the prospective farmer or rancher to begin the process of obtaining status by contacting the agricultural appraiser at the beginning of the three-year time period. This way, the appraiser has the opportunity to view the land and the activity during the three-year period. When the prospective farmer or rancher requests status and presents proof of agricultural use for the prior three years, the appraiser will ascertain whether the documentation is sufficient, since she had no opportunity to view the activity in progress. A larger burden of proof rests with the petitioner going this route.

The property owner should fill out a questionnaire regarding the intended use of the land and return it to the Assessor’s Office along with any pertinent documentation of use. The Agricultural Appraiser will review the land, the proposed agricultural use and the size, location, and surrounding uses before making a decision on re-classification.

Maintaining Agricultural Classification

Annual Proof of Use

To maintain agricultural classification, the land must be used agriculturally on a continuous basis each year thereafter or it can be re-classified as residential or vacant land.

Please send verification of agricultural use of the property to the Routt County Assessor's Office once a year. Written information received will not be used as the sole reason for classification of the property. The agricultural appraiser may also physically inspect properties to verify use.

The following items are examples of documentation of agricultural use:

- Copy of Schedule F or Form 3548 of Federal Income Tax Return
- Profit & Loss statement
- Copies of leases with proof of payment (copy of check), receipts, bills of sale for agricultural products
- Livestock shipping receipts
- Recommendation by the Department of Forestry for a forest management program
- A recorded Conservation Easement
- Enrollment in a Government conservation CRP program covering a major portion of the property. (Not all government programs are evidence of agricultural use.)
- Land restoration through a written conservation program with the CSU Extension office or other qualified agency.
- For breeding: copies of stud fees, veterinarian bills, or mare and stud purebred papers
- Any other reasonable proof

If the property will not have a productive year for a legitimate reason, such as a fallow year, aggressive weed spraying, or field reconstruction, please inform our office. We appreciate the communication, and understand normal agricultural cycles.

If you have further questions, please call the Routt County Assessor's Office (970) 870-5544 extension 463.

**APPLICATION FOR AGRICULTURAL STATUS
MEADOW HAY QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name _____ Date _____
Phone # _____

1. Please indicate the account numbers of the parcels for which you are applying, their size and location (street address, county road, or Section, Township, Range).
Account # R _____ Total Acreage: _____ Location: _____
2. How much of the total acreage of your parcel is used for production of hay?
3. Do you rely on native grasses primarily for your crop?
4. Do you supplement the native hay with any seed? If so, what kind?
5. Do you use any fertilizer, herbicide or other pesticide for your hay crop? If so, what kind and amount per year?
6. Do you lease additional land to use for production of hay? Under whose ownership is the other land and how many acres in each parcel?
7. If you participate in a landlord-tenant agreement, how do the landlord and tenant participate in expenses? What is the landlord's share for each crop?
8. What is your typical crop yield per acre? What price do you get per ton?
9. Do you cut and bale your own hay or do you have someone else cut and bale? If so, who? Does the hay harvester charge a fee or percentage of the production? How much?
10. Do you have any type of irrigation? If so, what kind and what is the source?
11. After your hay is cut and baled, do you after-graze any livestock or horses? If so, what kind?
12. In what month and year did you begin agricultural use of the property? Do you have receipts, leases, copies of payment checks, or other substantiation for that period? Please attach copies.

Please attach any applicable documentation and return the questionnaire to:
Routt County Assessor's Office
PO Box 773210, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

**APPLICATION FOR AGRICULTURAL CLASSIFICATION
GRAZING LAND QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name _____ Date _____
Phone # _____

1. Please leave information for access to property, if other than owner (foreman, caretaker, tenant)
Name _____ Phone Number _____

1. Please indicate the account numbers of the parcels for which you are applying, their size and location (street address, county road, or Section, Township, Range).
Account # R _____ Total Acreage: _____ Location: _____

2. How much of the total acreage of your parcel(s) is used for grazing livestock?

3. How many and what types of livestock are grazed on your property?

4. Do you own the livestock that are being grazed on your property, or do you have a lease with an agricultural producer? Name of the lessee? Dates of lease?

5. Do you lease additional land to use for the grazing of your livestock? Under whose ownership is the other land and how many acres in each parcel?

6. What are the arrangements of the leases? (price per AU, length in years/months, etc.)

7. Do you cultivate any hay for winter feed on any of your property? How many acres of land do you use for the production of hay?

8. How much hay do you purchase for winter feed?

9. Do you have any stock water available on your property and what is the source of the water?

10. What type of fencing do you have for your grazing land? (None, perimeter, cross-fenced, etc)

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