

**GUIDELINES FOR LAND UNDER 1-D-1 (Open-Space)
AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL
Amended for the 2010 Tax Year as follows:**

The Texas Constitution permits special agricultural appraisal if land and its owner meet specific requirements defining farm & ranch use. Land will not qualify simply because it is rural or has some connection with agricultural.

Section 23.51 of the Texas Property Tax Code sets the standards for determining whether land qualifies for open-space agricultural use. "Qualified Open-Space land means that land is currently devoted principally to agricultural use to the degree of intensity generally accepted in the area."

Agricultural uses include but are not limited to the following activities:

- Cultivating the soil, planting seed and producing crops for human food, animal feed or fiber.
- Floriculture which is the cultivation and management of ornamental and flowering plants;
- Viticultural which is the cultivation of grapes
- Horticultural which is the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs and other plants
- Maricultural is land used to produce fish and other forms of aquatic life
- Raising or keeping livestock which means a domesticated animal that derives its primary nourishment from vegetation, supplemented as necessary with commercial feed. Livestock includes meat or dairy cattle, horses, goats, swine, poultry and sheep. Wild animals are not considered livestock.
- Exotic game for commercial use means raising a cloven-hoofed ruminant mammal that is not native to Texas and is not "livestock". Raising such game may qualify but must meet the primary use test discussed below:
 - Are there physical improvements such as high fences to control the herd?
 - Will the stocking levels justify the investment and ensure a future income?
 - Is there a breeding and herd management procedure that emphasizes commercially valuable products (meat or leather) over recreational products such as hunting trophies?
 - Is there an active business plan showing herd size, harvest records and do federally approved inspectors supervise slaughter and dressing?

Harvesting native plants that grow wild or hunting native wild animals such as deer or turkey will not qualify for agricultural use.

SMALL TRACTS OF LAND SPLIT FROM LARGER TRACTS

When a small tract of land is partitioned off from a larger tract and the small tract is fenced, it becomes an independent tract of land. The tract must meet the degree of intensity qualifications for Blanco County. Independent tracts of land must qualify upon their own merit.

PRIMARY USE

The principle use of a tract of land must be agricultural. The primary use of any tract 10 acres or less, will generally be considered residential. To qualify for 1-d-1 Open-Space Agricultural Valuation the owner of the land shall:

- Have a sufficient number of acres to support animal units
- Show the lands ability to produce an agricultural product
- The land must be currently devoted principally to agricultural use
- The land must be devoted to an agricultural use to the degree of intensity typical to this area
- The land must have been in agricultural use at least five of the last seven years
- The owner on January 1 of the taxing year who claims that their land is eligible for agricultural use must file a timely, valid application. To be valid, the application must be on a form provided by the appraisal office and prescribed by the comptroller and it must contain the information necessary to determine the validity of the property owner's claim of agricultural use on their land
- We request that owners include a copy of their Schedule E or F form, which was filed with their income tax for the prior year

DEGREE OF INTENSITY STANDARDS

The Chief Appraiser establishes intensity levels, which are what an owner is putting into their agricultural enterprise in time, labor, equipment, land management and capital. Each type of agricultural use has a different level of intensity. The Chief Appraiser determines the typical minimum levels involved in each step.

- Dry-land farming requires tilling the soil, planting, applying herbicides and harvesting.
- The raising of livestock requires fencing, proper management of land for long-run forage, enough animal units to match the lands carrying capacity and herd management procedures for getting the animals to market. Degree of Intensity questions include:
 - Is the fencing already in place?
 - Is it typical according to the fencing requirements listed in the fencing section of this manual?
 - Is the fencing maintained?
 - Is the minimum carrying capacity sufficient?
 - Are animal units being taken to market?

TYPES OF OPERATIONS

1. **Cow/Calf Operation** – Raising beef for sale to either processors or other operators as breeding stock.
2. **Stocker/Feeder Operation** – Raising beef for processors
3. **Sheep** – Raising sheep for production of wool, breeding stock or meat.
4. **Goats** – Raising goats for the production of mohair, breeding stock, meat or dairy products
5. **Horses/Donkeys/Mules** – Raising or having horses, donkeys or mules
6. **Exotics** – Raising a species of game not indigenous to this state, including axis deer, nilga antelope, red sheep or other cloven-hoofed ruminant mammals or exotic fowl as defined by Section 142.001, Agricultural Code, for supplying meat, sale of breeding animals to other breeders, with leather for the specialty markets being a secondary by-product.
7. **Wildlife Management** – Land must first have been appraised under 1-d-1 Agricultural Use and property owner must own a minimum of 20.00 acres to even apply for this. Land that is actively managed in a co-op, or has endangered species, must have a minimum of 12.5 acres to apply. Land shall be used in at least three of the seven listed objectives to propagate a sustaining, breeding, migrating or wintering population of indigenous wild animals for human use, including food, medicine or recreation:
 - Habitat Control
 - Erosion Control
 - Predator Control
 - Providing supplemental supplies of water
 - Providing supplemental supplies of food
 - Providing shelter
 - Making census counts to determine population

Blanco County requires an approved, written plan and the Texas Parks and Wildlife 9 page worksheet be completely filled out and on file. We also encourage property owners to have an independent biologist, a Texas Parks & Wildlife or Natural Resource Conservation Service representative or the local extension agent visit your property and assist the owner in the preparation of their written management plan. We will test for primary use and determine if their plan clearly outlines future objectives that can be met in a timely manner. Please document your yearly usage with both pictures and receipts. A yearly update is also part of maintaining a Wildlife Exemption.

TYPICAL STOCKING RATIOS

Stocking ratios are listed for non-drought years. Stocking ratios on different soil types vary greatly with the conditions and are based on the amount of forage consumed in a given period of time. Property owners should have sufficient number of acres to house 3 animal units.

Animal Unit (AU) equivalents are as follows:

1 Bull	2 AU
1 Cow or Cow w/ Calf	1 AU
2 Calves	1 AU
1 Heifer (2 yr old)	1 AU
6 Goats	1 AU
5 Sheep	1 AU
1 Horse	1 AU
2 Llamas	1 AU

- **RID1, RID2, TD1, TD2 – Improved Grass Range** **1 AU to 15 Acres**
These classes of rangeland and old farmland include land, which has been planted with improved grasses such as Coastal Bermuda and Klein grass. These pastures are usually fertilized and used for hay production and/or grazing. Land is relatively level and has good soil and good drainage. This type of land is not typical in the hill county.
 - **RN1, RN2, RN3 – Native Range** **1 AU to 25 Acres**
These classes of native range are covered mainly in native grasses such as Bluestem, Grama and Buffalograss, etc. Included in this class are old improved pastures and tillable land that has gone back to native grasses. Native range is generally relatively level to slightly sloping terrain with good to moderate soils with minimal brush.
 - **RB2 – Rangeland** **1 AU to 30 Acres**
Rangeland classes include moderate to sloping terrains. Acreage with heavier type scrubbrush and an influx of cedar or oak trees is common in the hill country. These lands have poor grazing capabilities due to soil, slope and brush problems.
 - **RB3 – Rangeland with Cedar** **1 AU to 35 Acres**
Rangelands with moderately to severely sloping steep slopes. Acreage is solid in brush, primarily cedar, which virtually eliminates grazing capabilities. Hilltops, hillsides, canyons and ravines may be included in this category.
- ✓ **NOTE –** The majority of the land in Blanco County is typically classed as **RN1, RN2, RN3, RB2 or RB3**. Keep that in mind when you are trying to determine stocking ratios on you land.

LEASED LAND

If a property owner chooses to lease their land to another party, the land must still meet the degree of intensity typical to this area. Blanco County requires a written lease agreement, which is signed by both parties and states the lease amount, per acre, as well as a contact person. Please include their name, address and a phone number where we can contact them. Lease agreements must reflect a fair market price. Generally accepted compensation in this county is variable based on different land types, with poor land falling in the \$2.50 per acre range and fertilized coastal fields more like \$20.00 an acre, however, \$4.00 to \$6.00 per acre is typical, unless you allow deer hunting, then the lease amount will be more.

FENCING REQUIREMENTS

Fencing is required in order to apply for the 1-d-1 Agricultural Use Exemption. Fencing should already be in place at the time you apply. Grazing land must be completely enclosed by a perimeter fence substantial enough to contain livestock. Gates should also be in place. Different types of operations require different types of fencing:

Cows – Typical fencing is 5-7 strand barbed wire; however, 5-7 strand smooth wire is also used with the top 1-2 strands being barbed wire.

Goats & Sheep – This type of operation requires more stringent fencing since these type of animals are smaller and can get out more easily than larger animals. Generally, at least 9 strands of wire or mesh fencing with 1-2 top strands being barbed wire is used to contain this type of animal unit. Barbed wire is recommended. We look for at least 9 strand or mesh type fencing with the top two strands barbed for goat and sheep operations.

Horses – Smooth rail fencing is typical for horses. Pipe fencing is most common, but smooth board or smooth wire fencing may be used. Barbed wire is discouraged.

Exotics – Must be completely enclosed by a perimeter fence substantial enough to contain the type of animals being raised. Typical game fences are net wire possibly with barbed wire on the top. Height can be no less than 8 feet.

Llamas – Since llama's do not challenge fences, typical range fencing is acceptable however, barbed wire is not recommended since it can cause injury.

CROPLAND

The land type for cropland includes TD1, TD2 and TD3. This is tillable land, which is cultivated regularly and seeded with annual crops. The land is relatively level with good soil and good drainage. Also included is RID1, which is the land type for Coastal Bermuda and Klein as permanent grasses, which require fertilization and weed control.

- Row Crop/Small Grain – Typically involves cultivation of the soil for planting crops including but not limited to oats, wheat, corn and milo.

- Hay – Typically involves growing alfalfa, klein, coastal or hybrid sorghum. These crops are cut and baled for sale or use as livestock feed. Weed control and brush control must be clearly evident.
- Coastal/Klein – Typically involves initial sprigging or seeding of permanent grass which is then fertilized and sprayed for weed control. These pasture lands are used for grazing, supplemental feeding and/or the sale of the fertilized hay.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

This includes both **OF1** and **ON1** land classifications. This includes orchards, vineyards and truck farming but does not include family gardens.

- Orchards/Vineyards – The growing of trees and grapevines that produce crops of nuts or fruits which are sold commercially. A regular schedule of pruning and spraying as well as brush and weed control must be evident.
- Lavender – The planting of lavender into plots for commercial sale. Must be actively managed, may be irrigated and documented proof of product.
- Truck Farming – This is cultivating the soil for planting vegetables, which are sold commercially. This type of operation depends on a good source of water and documentation as to whom the product was sold to.
- Government programs – currently the only program that will qualify is the CRP 10 year deferment program.

EXCEPTIONS

- Small tracts that are used in conjunction with a larger tract for agricultural purposes may qualify. This exception is generally used by families, which may deed a small tract to a family member who then leases it back to the parents without fencing off the small tract as a separate and independent tract.
- Small tracts with a home built upon it that is not a part of a larger tract will be considered primarily residential, with agricultural use secondary. Open-space must have agricultural use as its primary use in order to qualify.
- Depending on weather conditions, land may be left idle in order to re-establish grasses. Land may only be left idle for an agriculturally related reason such as re-seeding native grasses or repairing fences. Land may never be left idle for longer than a two-year period. In fact, in good weather conditions, one year is often all that is necessary. Owner must fill out a laying idle form, which is available from our office and must re-file a 1-d-1 Open-Space Application the year following an idle period for re-evaluation. This is at the sole discretion of the Chief Appraiser for Blanco County.

These guidelines are subject to periodic review by both the Chief Appraiser and the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee will only offer advice, which will be carefully considered. They are not a board, only an advisory committee, which offers advice on agricultural operations typical to Blanco County.

Changes will be made as needed to comply with changes in the State Comptroller's Manual and/or Texas Property Tax Code. Changes made are at the sole discretion of the Chief Appraiser of Blanco County.