

Narcisse Community Pasture

The Narcisse Community Pasture is 5,696 ha (14,074 ac) in size, consisting of forest, wetland, native grassland and a couple of tame fields seeded many years ago. It has a grazing season of over 4.5 months (120+ days) from late May to mid October. Livestock carrying capacity is set at nine hundred head of 1400lb adults (with calf by side). The grazing system is a simple rotational system with several herds throughout the pasture. Livestock water is sourced from windmills, wells, and dugouts. The 160 acre block of eight paddocks in the southwest part of the pasture is land that has been set aside since the 1960s as research plots for Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and does not reflect the grazing practices on the remainder of the pasture.

This pasture is one of 87 federally operated community pastures across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, on marginal lands whose best agricultural use is for pasture. The mandate of the Community Pastures Program is to conserve the ecological integrity of these lands while providing grazing opportunities for local producers. The goal for range condition is mid-good condition.

Range condition at this pasture is mostly in the fair to good categories for both grassland and bush fields. There are concerns about red bartsia (a noxious weed) at the pasture. Experimentation has been done with various chemicals to treat this weed, but results have not been assessed. Another major pasture management challenge is aspen expansion, which is being treated with herbicides, maintenance of access trails and fencelines through bush, and grazing pressure. Gravel extraction has been ongoing from pits across the pasture and poses challenges due to loss of grazing land, pasture access issues, weed expansion and lack of recovery of the land after extraction.

Wildlife habitat in the pasture is valued by Manitoba Conservation, especially in the north end. Also associated with this pasture are the Narcisse Snake Dens (which are very important for red-sided garter snake habitat and hibernation and a very popular stop for tourists in the spring – accessible just off the highway).

