

NEBRASKA AIRPORT REMINDERS

NDOT DIVISION OF AERONAUTICS | APRIL 2025 | TURF MANAGEMENT



ITEM 1

Why Turf Management Matters

ITEM 2

Operational Safety Protocols for Mowing

ITEM 3

Example Turf Management Plan for GA Airports in Nebraska.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Call the NDOT Division of
Aeronautics office at
402.471.2371

TURF MANAGEMENT

Maintaining healthy turf on and around airport property is a fundamental part of ensuring airfield safety, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency. In Nebraska, where many airports rely on turf runways and grass-covered safety zones, a well-structured mowing and vegetation management plan helps support safe aircraft movement, mitigate wildlife hazards, and protect critical infrastructure. This flyer outlines why turf care matters, key safety protocols for mowing operations, and an example turf management plan.

ITEM 1: *Why Turf Management Matters.* Turfgrass is a critical component of airfield systems, providing:

- Wildlife Hazard Reduction – Properly maintained turf discourages birds and mammals. A maximum height of 12 inches is ideal to minimize attractants without compromising visibility.
- Support for Turf Runways – Routine mowing ensures turf runways remain smooth, strong, and safe for takeoffs and landings—especially at general aviation airports.
- Drainage and Erosion Control – Dense, healthy turf reduces soil erosion, supports water infiltration, and prevents ponding along pavement edges.
- Infrastructure Protection – Overgrown vegetation can obstruct signage and lights or damage surfaces. Regular mowing keeps operational areas safe and clear.
- Regulatory Compliance – Meets FAA and NDOT guidance, including: [AC 150/5200-](#)

[33C](#) - Wildlife Hazard Management, [AC 150/5370-10](#) - Turf Runway Maintenance, and [ACRP Synthesis 128 \(2023\)](#) - Best Practices in Turf and Vegetation Management.

ITEM 2: *Operational Safety Protocols for Mowing.* Mowing within or near active airfield areas requires clear communication, operational awareness, and adherence to safety procedures. These protocols help prevent runway incursions, protect personnel, and maintain safe operations during maintenance activities.

- Maintain radio contact with airport operations/users while mowing in or near movement areas.
- Issue NOTAMs when mowing is planned near runways, taxiways, or other operational zones.
- Equip mowers with amber beacons, flags, or strobe lights for visibility.
- Avoid mowing during dawn, dusk, or low visibility, as these times coincide with peak wildlife activity.
- Keep a turf logbook noting mowing dates, locations, and any issues or wildlife sightings.
- Ensure all mowing personnel receive basic airfield operations training, including:
 - Understanding hold lines, movement area boundaries, and runway safety areas
 - Recognition of airfield signage, markings, and lighting
 - Procedures for safe vehicle entry/exit to movement areas

NEBRASKA AIRPORT REMINDERS

NDOT DIVISION OF AERONAUTICS | APRIL 2025 | TURF MANAGEMENT



TURF MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

These safety measures support both short-term mowing efficiency and long-term airfield safety compliance, particularly at airports without control towers.

ITEM 3: *Example Turf Management Plan for GA Airports in Nebraska.* A defined turf management plan ensures airports can adapt to Nebraska’s seasonal climate, manage turf around operational areas, and uphold safety and compliance standards year-round. The following is a general example. Your turf management plan should be tailored to your specific airport environment, operational needs, and regional conditions.

Example Turf Management Plan

Area	Mowing Frequency	Max. Target Height	Priority Level	Notes
Runway Safety Areas	Weekly to every 2 weeks	6-8 inches	High	Supports aircraft overrun/veer-off protection and FAA compliance.
Runway Shoulders (pavement to lights)	Every 2 weeks (more in growing season)	6-10 inches	High	Clear visibility of edge lights; turf must not obstruct NAVAIDs.
Taxiways & Taxilanes (edges & safety areas)	Every 2 weeks	6-10 inches	High	Ensures visibility of markings/lights; reduces wildlife habitat.
Apron Perimeters & Grass Islands	Weekly to every 2 weeks	6-8 inches	Medium	Maintains clear sightlines for pilots and ground crews.
Turf Runways (if present)	Weekly during growing season	4-6 inches	High	Maintain a level surface safe aircraft movement; avoid ruts & clumping.
Infield Areas (between paved surfaces)	Every 2-4 weeks (as needed)	8-12 inches	Medium	Kept taller to discourage birds; adjust per airport’s wildlife management plan.
Perimeter & Non-Operational Areas	Monthly to 6-week intervals	10-14 inches	Low	Maintain to control weed spread and reduce fire risk.
Obstruction Zones & NAVAID Clear Zones	Monthly or as needed	6-10 inches	High	Vegetation must not encroach on protected surfaces or block signals.

Seasonal Considerations

Season	Mowing Frequency	Max. Target Height	Key Tasks
Spring (Apr-May)	Weekly to every 2 weeks	6-8 inches	Fertilize early, inspect for winter damage.
Summer (Jun-Aug)	Every 2 weeks (increase in rain)	8-12 inches	Monitor growth, avoid scalping, manage wildlife.
Fall (Sep-Oct)	Weekly to taper in Oct.	6-8 inches	Aerate, apply final fertilizer, weed control.
Winter (Nov-Mar)	No mowing	Dormant	Inspect for erosion, snow removal as needed.

Note: The needs of your airport may differ from what is shown in the Seasonal Considerations table.

ITEM 1

Why Turf Management Matters

ITEM 2

Operational Safety Protocols for Mowing

ITEM 3

Example Turf Management Plan for GA Airports in Nebraska.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Call the NDOT Division of Aeronautics office at 402.471.2371