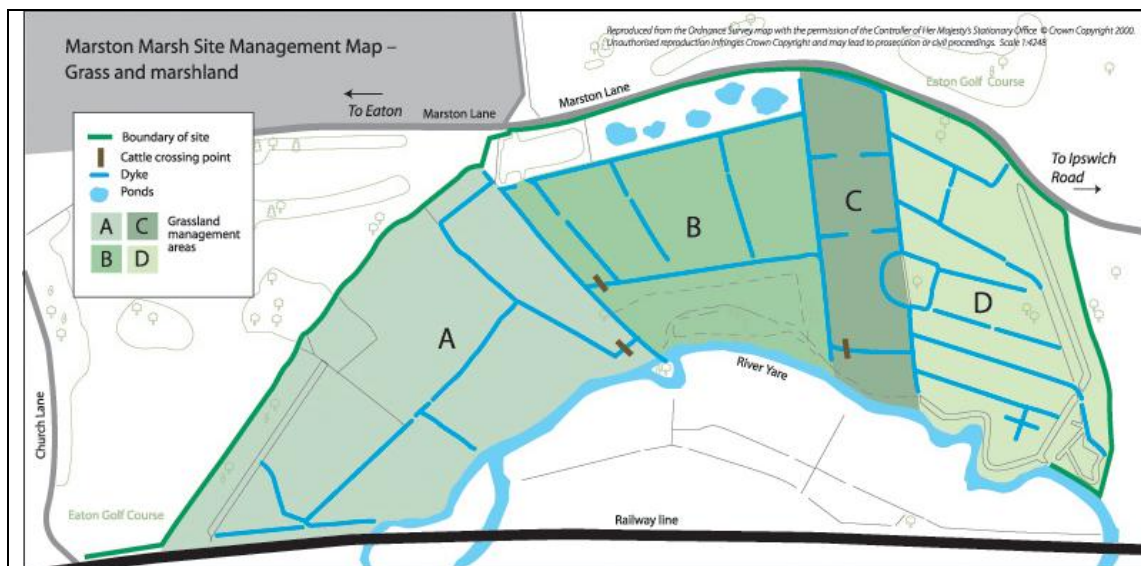


Marston Marshes – Here are some of the Frequently Asked Questions about the Cattle on Marston Marsh



Why are the cattle on the marsh?

The grazing animals help us to manage the marshes in the most effective and natural way. Cattle are the best grazing animals to remove coarse grasses. Rather than nibbling or chomping the vegetation they wrap their tongues around the grass and pull it into their mouths. This is why a field grazed by cows has a tussocky appearance whereas a field grazed by sheep or horses tends to be flat. The varying height provides micro-habitats for invertebrates and exposes pockets of bare earth that enable seeds to set. Their dung attracts flies and other insects which, in turn, are an important food source for bats and birds such as swallows, swifts and house martins.

What would be the effect if it wasn't grazed and why not use machinery?

In sections not previously grazed, such as in grassland Area C, the tall sedge has grown into dense, impenetrable, species-poor, swards. Cutting of a section of the sedge in 2013 and subsequent grazing will help re-instate this as species rich hay meadow. The areas where we use the animals vary from wet marshland habitat, which includes sedges and rushes, to species-rich meadows; to try to manage these areas without cattle would be very expensive and time consuming. Machinery would fail to imitate the trampling benefits provided by the cattle's feet and it would not deal with the differing heights of vegetation. However, occasionally we do use pedestrian mowing equipment and volunteers to cut and remove vegetation from small areas of the site. We use this technique in sections where the sedge has grown into dense, impenetrable species-poor sward. After cutting new growth will come through and this is more palatable to the grazing cattle and will help to develop a more diverse marshland habitat.

There seem to be fewer orchids now than there used to be before it was grazed

There is anecdotal evidence from long-time residents that orchids were once far more abundant on Marston Marshes. Monitoring of the site since 2005 had noted that numbers of orchids had steadily declined for several years. More recent monitoring in Spring 2013 noted that orchids were again at least as abundant as they were in 2005, and possibly more so. Specialists believe that the reason for the orchid decline is more likely to be due to a *lack* or insufficiency of grazing, which allowed taller species like sedges and reeds to gradually take over. Now that the grazing is firmly re-established an increase in orchid numbers is expected.

Marston Marshes – Here are some of the Frequently Asked Questions about the Cattle on Marston Marsh

The cattle cause most damage to the river banks

There are some sections of the riverbank to the west of the site where the cattle get into the river and chew-up the riverbank. However, the areas that have needed most shoring-up have been cattle-free areas where dogs regularly enter the water. In these areas faggots have been installed to prevent further erosion of the riverbank and protect the path.

Can the cattle be separated from the public?

This would require more fencing and gates around the site at considerable expense. This would also restrict access of people to other areas of the site and additional fencing would detract from the overall openness of the marshes. This would also require additional maintenance to control growth in those areas no longer grazed by the cattle. Machinery access is limited and does not do as good a job as the cattle. Cattle management would be more difficult to ensure that when moved to new areas they do not stray into fenced-off areas.



I am frightened of the cattle and this stops me from enjoying the marsh

The cattle are curious and will watch you as you pass by. They are constantly on the move and will graze different areas. They tend to keep together as a herd and follow each other around the site. Do not make sudden movements or loud noises to frighten the cattle. Talking to them quietly will let them know you are there and, providing they have space to do so, they will move away as you approach.

What should I do if my dog annoys the cattle and they start to head towards me?

When walking in an area where the cattle are grazing, please try to keep your dog under close control, preferably on a lead so that it can't chase the cattle. A chasing dog can make the herd become more inquisitive and protective. Also try and avoid walking through the middle of the cattle especially with your dog, go around the cattle. The cattle are not interested in you they are more interested in your dog. If the cattle start to become inquisitive let your dog off the lead, as the cattle will follow your dog, allowing you to move away from the cattle. Your dog will soon find you. Call your dog to encourage it to leave the cattle alone and move away; once you and your dog are away from the cattle put your dog back on a lead. Move quietly away from the area so as not to spook the cattle.

When training or playing ball with your dog please use an area where the cattle are not grazing.

Who do I contact if I see anything wrong on the Marsh?

If it is an emergency or where life is in danger then call the emergency services on 999. Other suspicious activities can be reported to the police on the non-emergency number: 101.

You can contact the City Council or the Norwich Fringe Project

City Council: All enquiries 0344 980 3333, Out of hours emergencies only 01603 412180

Norwich Fringe Project: Telephone: Office: 01603 423303, Mobile: 07733102013