



## Habitat management for the Adonis Blue

**The overall aim is to maintain substantial areas of unimproved grassland turf in the height range of 1-4cm for most of the year, but allowing plants to flower in abundance. The need for short-grazed areas is most critical in the late summer for use by the second generation of adults. Earlier in the year slightly longer vegetation (up to 8cm) may be tolerated.**

### Grazing

Suitable conditions can be maintained by moderate-heavy grazing sites either by cattle, ponies, sheep or rabbits. However, it is possible to over-graze Adonis Blue sites, particularly in years when the growing season is poor, such as in years of drought. Also, the first generation larvae may need somewhat taller vegetation during June and July, and adults of both generations require nectar sources that might be grazed off by heavy grazing, especially by sheep and rabbits.

The largest colonies occur under continuous grazing or winter and early spring grazing, which ensure a short sward when the females are flying in May and June.

Colonies can coexist on sites with a wide range of butterfly species that require taller or variable swards as long as there are patches (0.5-1 ha) of suitably short vegetation. This can be done through rotational grazing of compartments or by maintaining small patches of suitable turf among taller growth by continuous, extensive grazing.

Winter grazing alone is usually enough to maintain a small to medium colony in most years if rabbits are also present, but some summer grazing is desirable. The difference between cattle and sheep grazing has not been thoroughly investigated but both are known to sustain good populations.

### below Horseshoe Vetch

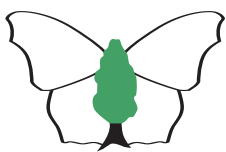


### Scrub control

The presence of scattered patches of scrub may be beneficial to the Adonis Blue as it provides shelter and slightly warmer conditions for breeding on adjacent downland. However, some sites have too much scrub and a proportion may need to be removed to enlarge the areas of open grassland.

In such cases, a proportion of the scrub should be removed leaving some, strategically placed, small patches for shelter. Stumps should be treated with herbicide to prevent regrowth where necessary and all cut material removed.

### below Ideal habitat, showing short-grazed vegetation with abundant Horseshoe Vetch



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

**Head Office** Manor Yard East Lulworth Wareham Dorset BH20 5QP  
Telephone: 0870 774 4309 Email: [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org)

**[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)**

Compiled by Martin Warren and Tom Wigglesworth. Photographs by Paul Pugh and Martin Warren.

Butterfly Conservation is a registered charity and non-profit making company, limited by guarantee.

Registered Office: Manor Yard East Lulworth Wareham Dorset BH20 5QP.

Registered in England No. 2206468 - Registered Charity No. 254937

Designed and produced by cellcreative 01942 681648. Printed on 100% recycled stock including 75% post-consumer waste.



**defra**  
Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs

This leaflet has been sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Details of Defra's Environmental Stewardship Scheme can be found at **[www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm)**

The scheme includes Higher Level Stewardship, which supports management for targeted butterflies, moths and other biodiversity.