

*What is*

# **SOLAR GRAZING**

*and*

## **HOW DOES IT WORK?**



Solar grazing is the method of vegetation control on a solar site using grazing livestock. Sheep are most often used for this work as they are best suited for solar installations due to their size and grazing behavior.

Solar companies contract with local sheep farmers to move the sheep onto the site in the spring, care for them through the grazing season, and move them off of the site for the winter. In warmer regions, sheep can graze solar sites year round. The shepherds provide water and minerals, monitor the health of the sheep and manage them to ensure vegetation doesn't become overgrown and shade the solar panels.

Sheep enjoy eating many types of weeds and invasive species, and are good at grazing underneath the panels where it is more labor intensive to mechanically mow. The well designed perimeter fence around a site contains the sheep and protects them from predators. The solar panels provide the sheep shelter from rain, wind, and direct sun on hot days.



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## Does solar grazing provide a meaningful opportunity for farmers?

The opportunity presented by solar grazing has the potential to be a game changer in terms of how both small and large sheep producers can realize value from their animals. Grazing sheep on solar sites helps to maintain a rural landscape, adds additional income streams to local farms, and enhances land stewardship.

## Why do sheep farmers participate in solar grazing?

New pastures and good fences bring sheep farmers to solar sites, providing an opportunity to sustain healthier and larger flocks. The sheep farmer usually enters into a contract with the solar owner who will pay the farmer to keep the vegetation in check, request for performance guarantees and insurance. The additional income helps the sheep farmer secure their farm operation. The solar owner will often supply other accommodation such as access to water or electricity. Solar Grazing Contract Templates are available for download at [www.solargrazing.org](http://www.solargrazing.org).



## Do farmers need special sheep to get under the panels?

No. There are dozens of varieties of sheep being used for this work. The most common sheep breeds used for solar grazing are Katahdins and Dorpers, which are standard sized sheep.



## Who does this and where?

At last count, the U.S. has 129,260.75 acres of solar sites maintained with 113,050 sheep and counting. Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Australia and South America all use sheep to maintain the vegetation around and beneath solar arrays.

## What about the bees?

Solar sites can host honeybees - and some host hives - along with grazing sheep. There are sites in North America where sheep farmers work alongside the beekeeper to their mutual benefit. Each solar site manager should work with the sheep farmer to develop a grazing plan that meets the needs of all parties. A Solar Beekeeping Contract Template is available for download at [www.solargrazing.org](http://www.solargrazing.org).



Photo by Dennis Schroeder / NREL  
National Renewable Energy Lab

The American Solar Grazing Association (ASGA) is a nonprofit group of sheep farmers and solar companies that has organized themselves to answer questions and educate others about solar grazing. For more information and for assistance in getting your flock started with solar grazing sites, please contact ASGA at [info@solargrazing.org](mailto:info@solargrazing.org).



[www.solargrazing.org](http://www.solargrazing.org)