

Natural Rangelands of the World

There are two types of rangelands in the world; the **natural or pure grasslands** and **man-made grasslands**:

- 1- **Natural grasslands (pure)**: Are these grasslands that human do not have role in its making (not made by man) and consists on the natural plants which are safe for animal grazing.

- 2- **The man-made grasslands** are not natural. The climax vegetation in such grasslands is generally forest, which has been destroyed by man for getting fuel and fodder, therefore, new tree growth cannot establish itself due to heavy grazing by domestic livestock. In some places periodic fires play an important role in preventing the establishment of trees growth and the area thus remains under a cover of grass.

The major classification of natural grasslands in the world based on local concepts and plant geography are follows:

1. Prairies:

The prairies are vast, treeless, climax grasslands occurring in the continent of North America (USA and Canada), and cover millions of

hectares. True grassland soil which is black in color, rich in organic matter and fertile is found there. Most of the prairies has now been converted into agricultural land.

2. Savannah

The Savannahs are vast natural grasslands, which distributed tree growth, and occur in the continent of Africa, they are transitional zone between dry grassland or semi-desert and tropical rain forest. They are rich in forage production, and sustain domestic livestock and a large population of wild animals.

3. Pampas:

The pampas are natural, treeless grasslands occurring in South America (Uruguay, Argentina, and part of Brazil). They support a big livestock industry in these countries, contributing greatly to the national economy.

4. Steppes

The Steppes are vast treeless grasslands in Siberia (Russia) below the Freezing Circle. They remain under snow during winter. The grasses and shrubs grow in spring and summer and provide grazing for livestock. During the 1950's an attempt was made to cultivate those grasslands for agriculture. Removal of the grass cover created serious erosion hazard and the plan was dropped.

5. Velds

The Velds are natural grasslands in South Africa and Zimbabwe, with a mixed growth of bushes, shrubs and trees, and are intensively managed for livestock production.

6. Alpine

Alpine grasslands occur in a belt in all high mountains, between the tree line and below the permanent snow line. Due to extremely cold temperatures, strong solar radiation, and high wind, tree species cannot grow in this zone. Only grasses and forbs can survive under such conditions and persist. Alpine grasslands are found in the Himalayas, the Andes, and other high mountains in the World. They have a high forage production and they are suitable for grazing in summer.

Based on the World's classification of the grasslands, there is no true grasslands like "Prairies" and "Savannah" exist in Iraq. However, in Kurdistan region, The Alpine grasslands are existing in many different mountain areas.