

Completing the Risk Mitigation Filter A Step-by-Step Guide for Users

The Risk Mitigation Filter (RMF) is a short paper form that helps a producer compare fencing and grazing alternatives. It places the status quo and other realistic choices side by side, makes barriers and conditions easier to see, and identifies when a decision needs a deeper RightRisk tool or specialist review. The RMF does not select an alternative or recommend a decision. The ratings reflect the producer's judgment about the operation and the decision being evaluated. Some decisions can stop with the RMF. Others need more analysis.

The current RMF can be downloaded at VirtualFence.RightRisk.org. It is a two-page landscape form. The front page contains the decision problem and comparison table. The back page records decision status, tool routing, key uncertainties, notes, and final checks.

Before Beginning

It helps for the producer to have a clear statement of the management problem, a short list of realistic alternatives, and enough information to make rough judgments about cost, labor, infrastructure, legal or institutional requirements, animal management, and contingency needs.

Exact dollar estimates are not required. The RMF uses relative ratings based on the operation being evaluated. The cost ratings are screening judgments about burden; they are not a total-cost, return-on-investment, or net-benefit calculation.

RightRisk Analytics

Tools and guides are available at no cost at the website <https://RightRisk.org>



Start At The Top

Ranch/Property Covered and *Date* identify the decision if the form is kept with operation records or revisited later, Figure 1.

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John P. Hewlett - University of Wyoming

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The *Decision Problem* is written as one clear management question, not as a preferred solution. For example: “How can late-season grazing on the home hay meadow be managed with less labor while keeping cattle within the existing physical perimeter?”

The first row, SQ-0, is the Status quo-no change alternative. It is rated like every other alternative. The form then provides ALT-1 through ALT-5 for up to five other realistic choices. Not every row must be used.

A populated row is completed across all eight criteria before the producer interprets its routing result. A blank cell is not a Conditional rating and does not add to the C-count, but an unfinished row is also not eligible to be labeled Filter OK. A missing rating must be resolved before Filter OK can be considered. If it cannot yet be resolved, the reason is recorded in *Notes* and, when important, *Key uncertainties*. The row remains incomplete.

Eight Criteria Columns

1. Problem Fit - S / M / C / P

Problem Fit asks how well the alternative addresses the stated decision problem.

S - Strong: directly addresses the problem.

M - Moderate: addresses an important part of the problem.

C - Conditional: fits only if one or more known conditions are met.

P - Poor: does little to address the problem as stated.

A **C** entered here means *Conditional* and is counted later in the *Escalation check*.

2. Risk Source - M / P / I / H / F

Risk Source identifies the kinds of risk involved:

M - Market

P - Production

I - Institutional/Legal

H - Human

F - Financial

More than one source may apply. The producer marks the applicable letters and underlines the primary source. *Risk Source* is diagnostic. It helps describe what kind of risk is involved; it does not add points to the C-count.

Figure 1. Example Ranch: Completed Risk Mitigation Filter, Front Page

Risk Mitigation Filter

A short screening instrument for fencing and grazing alternatives

Ranch/Property Covered: Example Ranch — Home Hay Meadow

Decision problem: How can late-season grazing on the home hay meadow be managed with less labor while keeping cattle within the existing physical perimeter?

Date: Example

Alternative (up to 5 named)	Problem Fit S/M/C/P	Risk Source M•P•I•H•F underline primary	Control Type Av•RP•RC•Tr•Ca•Ac underline primary	Feasibility I•L•Lg•A•Ct indicate Y/N/C	Up-front Cost L/M/H/E	Recurring Cost L/M/H/E	Failure Consequence L/M/H	Next Step tool/specialist or “Filter OK”
SQ-0 Status quo (no change)	C	P <u>H</u>	Ac	YYYYY	L	L	L	Filter OK
ALT-1 <i>Small VF pilot after haying</i>	M	P <u>H</u>	RP	YCYYY	M	M	L	Filter OK
ALT-2 <i>Permanent cross-fence expansion</i>	S	<u>F</u> H	Av <u>RP</u>	YYYYY	H	L	M	MTRA
ALT-3								
ALT-4								
ALT-5								

Ratings: S = Strong, M = Moderate, C = Conditional, P = Poor | L = Low M = Moderate H = High E = Extreme

Risk Sources: M = Market, P = Production, I = Institutional/Legal, H = Human, F = Financial

Control Types: Av = Avoid, RP = Reduce Probability, RC = Reduce Consequence, Tr = Transfer, Ca = Increase Capacity, Ac = Accept

Feasibility Flags: I = Infrastructure, L = Labor, Lg = Legal, A = Animal-Management, Ct = Contingency

Feasibility Ratings: Y = Yes, N = No, C = Conditional

Continue on back →

3. Control Type - Av / RP / RC / Tr / Ca / Ac

Control Type identifies what the alternative does about risk:

- Av - Avoid**
- RP - Reduce Probability**
- RC - Reduce Consequence**
- Tr - Transfer**
- Ca - Increase Capacity to Bear**
- Ac - Accept**

More than one control may apply. The primary control is underlined. *Control Type* also describes the decision; it is not a score.

4. Feasibility - I / L / Lg / A / Ct

Feasibility asks whether the alternative can actually be carried out.

Five separate factors are rated:

- I - Infrastructure**
- L - Labor**
- Lg - Legal/Institutional**
- A - Animal Management**
- Ct - Contingency**

Each factor receives one rating: Y / N / C

Y - Yes: the requirement can be met.

N - No: the requirement cannot be met under current conditions.

C - Conditional: the requirement can be met only if a known condition is satisfied.

Ct is the abbreviation for the *Contingency factor*.

C is reserved for the rating *Conditional*.

An **N** is not counted in the C-count and does not automatically mean the row is crossed out. If the barrier cannot realistically be corrected within the decision timeframe, the alternative does not advance and *Next Step* records "Do not carry forward." If the barrier may be corrected, the condition is explained in *Notes* and the row routes

to the appropriate specialist or deeper analysis.

The **Lg** rating is a screening judgment, not a legal determination. If the producer knows that an approval, permit, lease condition, or agency action must be satisfied, Lg may be rated C and the condition is recorded in *Notes*. If the producer is not currently able to rate Lg, the producer should not use C merely to mean "unsure"; the item should be handled as an unrateable entry as described below.

5. Up-front Cost - L / M / H / E

This column asks how large the one-time cost is relative to what the operation can absorb:

- L - Low**
- M - Moderate**
- H - High**
- E - Extreme**

Extreme means the cost exposure is large enough that screening alone is not adequate. **E** is not part of the C-count. It independently requires deeper analysis.

6. Recurring Cost - L / M / H / E

This column rates the continuing cost relative to the operation's cash flow and management burden.

The same **L / M / H / E** scale applies.

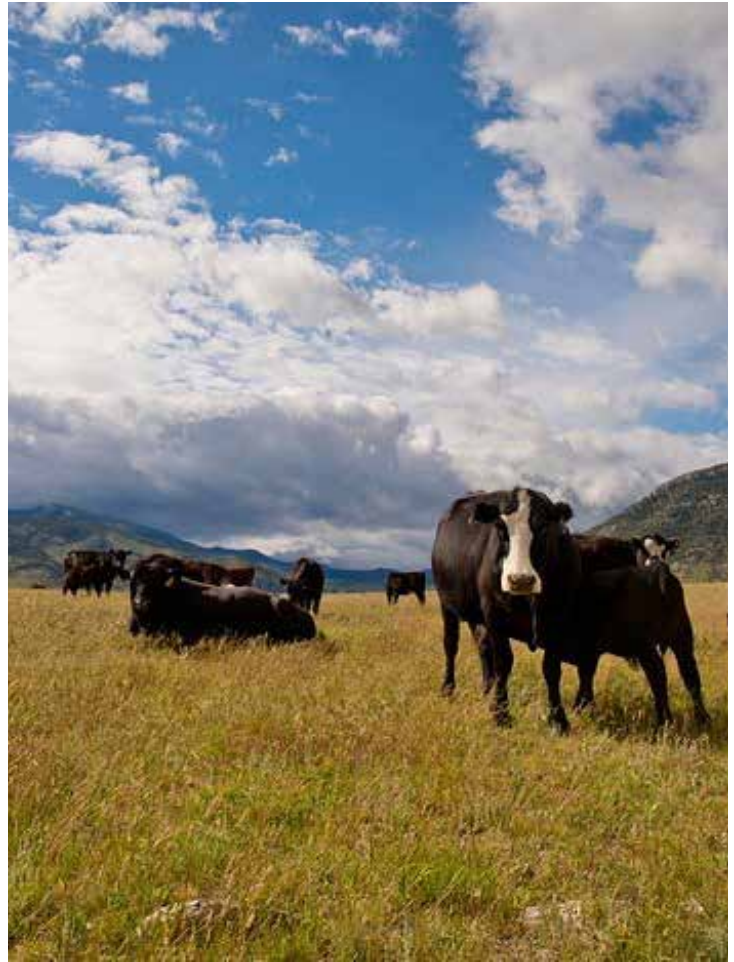
An *Extreme* recurring cost independently requires deeper analysis and is not part of the C-count.

7. Failure Consequence - L / M / H

Failure Consequence asks how serious the result would be if the alternative did not perform as needed.

- L - Low**
- M - Moderate**
- H - High**

A *High Failure Consequence* prevents Filter OK and requires deeper analysis and/or specialist review. *Moderate* and *Low* do not by themselves create automatic escalation.



8. Next Step

Next Step records what happens to that row after screening.

It may contain *Filter OK*, the name of a deeper *RightRisk* tool, a *specialist referral*, or a screening

disposition such as *Do not carry forward*.

When A Rating Cannot Be Made

C means *Conditional*; it does not mean “uncertain,” “unknown,” or “not sure.” A producer who cannot make a rating with reasonable confidence leaves that cell temporarily blank and records the reason in *Notes* using the row ID. If the missing fact or assumption could change the decision or routing, it is also listed under *Key uncertainties* on the back page. This convention applies to every column. For example, an unknown legal or agency requirement is recorded as an unresolved Lg question rather than being assigned C simply because the producer is unsure.

A row with an unresolved blank remains incomplete and cannot be labeled Filter OK. If several ratings cannot be made with reasonable confidence, the *Fit-for-purpose check* may indicate that the compact RMF does not provide enough detail and that a deeper tool or qualified advisor is needed.

A Short Example

Assume a ranch is deciding how to improve late-season grazing on a home hay meadow while reducing labor demands. The physical perimeter fence remains in place. Three rows might read as follows, Figure 1.

In ALT-1, Labor is Conditional because a useful pilot depends on enough management time being available after haying. That produces one counted C. The row remains Filter OK because the count is three or fewer, there is no unresolved N, no Extreme cost, no High Failure Consequence, no required specialist handoff, and the small trial fits screening-level analysis.

ALT-2 has no counted C values, but it still routes to MTRA because it is a multi-year capital decision with a cost structure that plays out over time. This shows why the C-count is an escalation signal, not the only routing rule.

Reading The Results

The C-count is completed one row at a time. The producer counts only **C = Conditional** ratings actually entered in these six places:

- Problem Fit; and
- The five Feasibility ratings: I, L, Lg, A, and Ct.



- Cost ratings are not part of the C-count. Ct is the name of the Contingency factor and is not counted by itself.
- More than three counted *Conditional* ratings in one row automatically requires further analysis or specialist review. That row cannot be labeled Filter OK.
- The count is not the only routing rule. *Extreme cost* independently requires deeper analysis. *High Failure Consequence* requires deeper analysis and/or specialist review. A correctable Feasibility **N** routes to appropriate *deeper analysis* or *specialist* review. An uncorrectable Feasibility **N** leads to *Do not carry forward*.

The broader RightRisk tool-depth map also applies:

- **RSP Tool** (Risk Scenario Planning) - bounded near-term change with meaningful uncertainty.
- **MTRA** (Multi-Temporal Risk Analyzer) - multi-year capital decision or alternatives with different cost streams over time.
- **ERA** (Enterprise Risk Analyzer) - enterprise-mix or whole-operation restructuring.
- **FRA** (Forage Risk Analyzer) - forage supply, lease, or grazing-resource economics are central.
- **RDFinancial** - whole-farm financial position or lender-facing analysis is needed.
- **Risk Navigator** - broad strategic planning across the operation.

Tools and user guides are available at RightRisk.org.

A **specialist review** may be the correct route when a legal, agency, technical, or other coverage-gap issue must be resolved before the decision can proceed.

Figure 2. Example Ranch: Completed Risk Mitigation Filter, Back Page

← Continued from front

Routing

Decision outcome - check one when a decision has been reached:

☐ Reject
 ☐ Defer
 ☐ Trial
 ☐ Partial adoption
 ☐ Full adoption

Or, if further analysis is needed:

☒ Decision pending deeper analysis

Tool routing (check one or more):

☒ Filter OK
 ☐ + RSP
☒ + MTRA
☐ + ERA
☐ + FRA
☐ + RDFinancial
☐ + Risk Navigator
☐ + Specialist Review

Key uncertainties to carry into the deeper tool:

Key uncertainty: whether the longer-term cost and management burden of the cross-fence expansion changes the preferred alternative.

Notes (reference by row ID):

SQ-0: Current system remains workable only while existing labor and physical-fence control remain adequate.

ALT-1: labor is conditional on enough post-hay management time.

ALT-2: multi-year cross-fence cost requires MTRA comparison.

Escalation check - For each alternative (row), count only C = Conditional ratings entered in Problem Fit and the five Feasibility ratings. More than three C-ratings in one row requires further analysis or specialist review. Other conditions may also require escalation. Extreme (E) cost requires deeper analysis. High (H) Failure Consequence requires deeper analysis and/or specialist review. Neither qualifies for Filter OK.

Fit-for-purpose check - If several ratings cannot be made with reasonable confidence, the RMF may not provide enough detail for the decision. A deeper RightRisk analysis tool or specialist review may be appropriate.

What to do with this filter
 Keep with operation records. Revisit at reassessment. Bring to an advisor session if applicable.
 If escalating to a deeper tool, carry the key uncertainties listed above into that analysis.

Risk Mitigation Filter v0.3 - The Risk Mitigation Filter does not recommend a specific outcome. Ratings entered on this form reflect the producer's judgment for the operation and decision being evaluated.

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 John P. Hewlett - University of Wyoming
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When Filter OK Applies

A populated row must contain every required rating before **Filter OK** is considered. Filter OK applies only when:

- The row is complete;
- There are three or fewer Conditional ratings;
- There is no unresolved N;
- There is no E cost or H Failure Consequence;
- No specialist review is required; and
- The decision does not require a deeper RightRisk tool.

Filter OK means the RMF provides enough screening information for that alternative at this stage. It does not mean the RMF selected or recommended the alternative.

Completing The Back Page

The back page separates *Decision outcome* from *Tool routing*, Figure 2.

Decision outcome records one of five final outcomes when the producer is ready to state the decision: **Reject**, **Defer**, **Trial**, **Partial adoption**, or **Full adoption**. If more analysis is needed before identifying the final outcome, **Decision pending deeper analysis** is checked instead. It is a temporary status, not a sixth outcome.

Tool routing summarizes the row-level *Next Steps* for alternatives that remain under consideration. The producer checks each distinct route that still applies. If one retained row is *Filter OK* and another retained row routes to *MTRA*, both *Filter OK* and *+ MTRA* are checked on the back page. A route from a row marked *Do not carry forward* is not included because that alternative is no longer advancing. Notes keyed to the row IDs show which route belongs to which alternative when the connection is not obvious.

In the example above, SQ-0 and ALT-1 are Filter OK while ALT-2 routes to MTRA. If all three remain under consideration, the back page records:

- Decision status: Decision pending deeper analysis
- Tool routing: Filter OK and + MTRA
- Notes: ALT-1 labor is conditional on enough post-hay management time. ALT-2 multi-year cross-fence cost requires MTRA comparison.
- Key uncertainty: whether the longer-term cost and management burden of the cross-fence expansion changes the preferred alternative.

Key Uncertainties And Notes

Key uncertainties are the unresolved facts or assumptions that could change the decision or routing. An item may appear in both places: Notes explain where it belongs; Key uncertainties keep the most important unresolved items visible when the decision moves to a deeper tool or advisor.

Notes explain conditions, reasons for ratings, specialist questions, and missing information. Each note begins with SQ-0 or ALT-1 through ALT-5 so the reason can be tied back to the correct row.

Fit-For-Purpose Check

The *Fit-for-purpose check* asks whether the producer can make the ratings with reasonable confidence. If several entries cannot be rated, or uncertainty is too widespread for the compact form to describe the decision, the RMF may not be the right level of analysis. The unresolved items are recorded in *Notes* and *Key uncertainties*, and the decision moves to a deeper RightRisk tool or qualified advisor rather than forcing uncertain ratings into the grid.

What The Filter Does - And Does Not Do

The RMF does not add the ratings into a score, calculate the economic return from an alternative, or tell the producer which

alternative to choose. *Risk Source* and *Control Type* describe the decision. *Problem Fit*, *Feasibility*, *Up-Front/Recurring Cost*, *Failure Consequence*, and the routing rules help identify whether screening is enough or whether more analysis is needed.

The completed RMF can be kept with operation records and revisited when conditions change. If deeper analysis follows, the row-level Next Steps, Notes, and Key uncertainties provide a record of what led to the next stage. Download the current Risk Mitigation Filter at VirtualFence.RightRisk.org.

For More Information

Visit VirtualFence.RightRisk.org for more details on how the *Risk Mitigation Filter* and the *RightRisk Analytics Toolbox* can assist in risk management planning for your operation. RightRisk.org offers a wide range of budgeting tools, courses, producer profiles, and other resources designed to help producers understand and manage risk, ensuring their operations thrive.



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