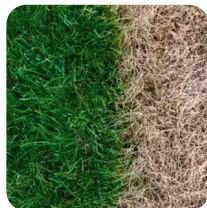


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# Watering Turf During Drought

## Keep your lawn alive without keeping it green.



**During drought years, the goal isn't a perfect lawn, the goal is a lawn that comes back.** Kentucky bluegrass, the most common turf grass in Eagle County, has a built-in survival trick: dormancy. When it doesn't get enough water, it goes brown and stops growing. The leaves die back, but the roots and crown stay alive underground, waiting for better conditions. Colorado experienced major drought years in 2002 and 2012, and in both cases, most dormant bluegrass lawns recovered completely once water returned.

## Brown is not dead. Brown is sleeping.



**Here's how to keep it dormant.** The minimum should be one good soak every two weeks. For Kentucky bluegrass in dormancy, about 1 inch of water applied every two weeks — roughly 2 inches per month — is the target to keep the grass dormant but alive. This is the survival floor. Less than this for more than 4–6 weeks puts the lawn at real risk.

## Keep it dormant.



**If your lawn has been dormant for six weeks without water, apply 1 to 1½ inches in a single application, then water again seven days later.** It should begin to green up after the second application. What does 1 inch of water actually look like? Set out a tuna can or shallow container when you run your system. When it has ½ inch of water in it, that zone has applied roughly 1 inch to the soil (accounting for absorption).

## When and how to water.



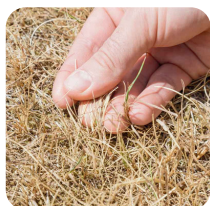
**Water early morning or evening, before 8 a.m. or after 8 p.m., to minimize evaporation in our dry, high-altitude air.** Water deeply and slowly. A quick 5-minute burst runs off the surface and doesn't reach roots. Slow soaking to a depth of 4-6 inches is what actually keeps grass crowns alive. Don't fertilize. Fertilizer won't perform without adequate water, pushes growth, and adds stress to an already stressed lawn. Hold off until conditions improve.

## Mow high if you mow at all.



**Keeping cool-season grass at 3.5–4 inches helps it tolerate heat stress.** Cutting short removes protective leaf mass and exposes the soil to more evaporation. Stay off it. Dormant grass crowns are fragile. Foot traffic on a dry dormant lawn can damage the growing points that need to survive. Keep kids and pets off as much as possible during the hottest, driest stretches.

## Know what to expect:



**Your lawn will turn brown. That's the plan.** Once Eagle County gets meaningful precipitation or you're able to resume normal irrigation, Kentucky bluegrass will green up again within 2–3 weeks. Patience and minimal water now means you won't be re-sodding in the fall.