

Get ready for the irrigation season this spring!

With spring and summer on the way, now is the time to check your equipment and irrigation schedules are up to scratch for summer, says IrrigationNZ's Project Manager Steven Breneger.

"Preparedness is vital. Poorly operating irrigation systems cost time and water efficiency, not to mention the additional cost to production. You need to make sure your irrigation systems are operating as efficiently as possible so make the best of water resources," says Steven.

Now is the time to start looking at the application performance of your irrigation assets. Here are some simple things that you can do.

1. CHECK YOUR FLOWS AND PRESSURES

These are often overlooked. They are generally affected by the wearing of pump impellers over time. Checking that your flow and pressures are within 10% of operating design is critical to application efficiency.

2. CHECK FOR LEAKS

Water not irrigating the right place is water wasted. This also applies to end gun settings and broken sprinklers.

3. DO A BUCKET TEST (IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY)

This lets you know how much water you are applying and how even your application is. Knowing how much water you are applying is critical for irrigation scheduling. Improving the uniformity of application will result in more of your irrigation being beneficially used.

4. INVEST IN SOIL MOISTURE MONITORING AND WEATHER FORECASTS

An efficient irrigation system is only as good as the scheduling of the irrigation. Knowing when to irrigate and how much to apply will save both time (irrigation days throughout the season) and money (pumping costs per day). Linking soil moisture monitoring with weather forecasts will allow any rainfall during the irrigation season to be taken advantage of.

5. MAKE A PLAN

With the experience of a few tough seasons behind us, now is the time to look at your seasonal plan. Does your consent have adaptive management conditions? How would this affect your irrigation scheduling? Identify your higher production areas and your lower production areas. Does your system have the capability to isolate areas of lower performance if the season gets tight?

6. UPSKILL YOUR STAFF

If you have any new staff on board you need to provide training so they understand how to correctly schedule and operate irrigation equipment to ensure you optimise water use and avoid damage to expensive equipment. IrrigationNZ has a range of Irrigation Operator and Manager training days running this spring.

See www.irrigationnz.co.nz/events for details.

