



Better winter grazing

What is winter grazing?

Winter grazing or cropping most commonly refers to situations where cattle are contained for break feeding of crops such as kale, turnip or fodder beet, or provided with supplementary feed that's brought into the paddock.

Are you aware of the rules relating to winter grazing?

Canterbury's varying soil types, topography and the quantity of winter feed crops, such as kale and fodder beet, makes many farming areas high risk for phosphorus and sediment loss into our waterways. This can lead to poor water quality.

Good winter grazing practices can help reduce run-off and also help with better soil productivity.

Environment Canterbury has implemented strict land use rules throughout Canterbury requiring farmers to manage a range of environmental issues, including those caused by winter grazing. In addition, some farmers will require a land-use consent because of the amount of winter grazing on their property.

We can help

For resources and guidelines email ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz or call 0800 324 636 and ask to speak to a Land Management Advisor.

To check what rules apply to your farm get in touch or visit www.canterburywater.farm

Follow these steps to graze better

1 Select your paddock wisely

- Choose flatter paddocks where possible - soil erosion rates increase with a steeper slope
- Avoid paddocks with soils prone to pugging
- Choose paddocks where you can fence any Critical Source Areas (CSAs) such as streams, gullies, tile drains and swales
- Have other options if the paddock is too wet to graze

2 Buffer next to Critical Source Areas

- Protect any CSAs: fence, leave grassed and have a generous ungrazed riparian strip between the crop and wet area
- Recommended buffer distances can vary according to paddock topography but farmers should aim for 3-10 metres between CSA and stock

3 Graze strategically

- Graze down towards a CSA - this leaves vegetation between bare ground and the CSA, reducing run-off
- Back-fence once crop has been eaten if practical
- Where soil conditions allow, sow a cool-tolerant catch crop, such as oats, as soon as possible after grazing. This soaks up nutrients from the soil and avoids them being leached into waterways
- In wet conditions, practice on/off grazing to give the soil a break from stock

“Good winter grazing doesn’t need to be difficult – it’s doing what’s best for the animals, the soil and the environment - looking at the whole package together.”

Photo: Lee Bryant



Planning is key when it comes to winter grazing

Having a plan for winter grazing doesn’t need to be over-complicated – the key is having a plan in the first place.

That’s the view of Lee Bryant, a South Canterbury sharemilker, who believes farmers can’t go wrong doing the ‘simple things well’ and - most importantly - having a plan written down and shared with key farm staff well ahead of winter.

Lee, who manages 1700 cows on 500 hectares at Ikawai, says he’s always been a stickler for being prepared.

“It shouldn’t be a surprise to experience very wet weather over winter – so it’s about planning in advance for when this happens, rather than ‘if’.

“Good winter grazing doesn’t need to be difficult – it’s doing what’s best for the animals, the soil and the environment - looking at the whole package together. The key is to not make a mess!”

Lee is always looking for ways to further reduce run-off from his paddocks and made a few further tweaks to his 2019 plan after attending a winter grazing field day at his neighbour Dan Studholme’s property and talking with one of Environment Canterbury’s Land Management Advisors.

“This year I’ve left a really large grass buffer at the bottom of one of my big kale blocks, to help filter any run-off. I’ve also fenced off even more gullies – which aren’t planted or grazed at all – to reduce them getting muddy, and it’s better for the stock.”

Here’s a few other tips from Lee:

Lighten up on the tractor use

Lee has used his winter grazing plan to ensure that tractor work - like setting up fencing breaks - is carried out ahead of the wetter months, to minimise impact on the soil. He then sets up temporary fencing on foot.

Keep your cows happy

According to Lee, keeping his cattle well-fed and calm reduces the amount they wander around the paddock seeking food, reducing impact and pugging.



Graze the southern slopes first

This winter, Lee grazed stock on his southern facing slopes first while the soil is dryer. As winter has progressed, he has moved them onto the north-facing slopes and into the paddocks that have already been opened up.

Compliance monitoring focus on high risk consents

Each year Environment Canterbury releases an annual summary of compliance monitoring grades so that farmers, as well as the wider community, can see if progress is being made.

Our approach is based on monitoring those consents which have a higher environmental risk, or consent holders who have a poor compliance record.

The results for the 2018-19 (see below) show high levels of A-grade compliance across most consent types (75-90%)

and with low levels (1-4%) of serious non-compliance.

For water consents (which make up 51% of those monitored) there was an 84% A-grade compliance, compared with 83% last year. For dairy effluent discharge consents there was 90% A-grade, (compared with 93% last year).

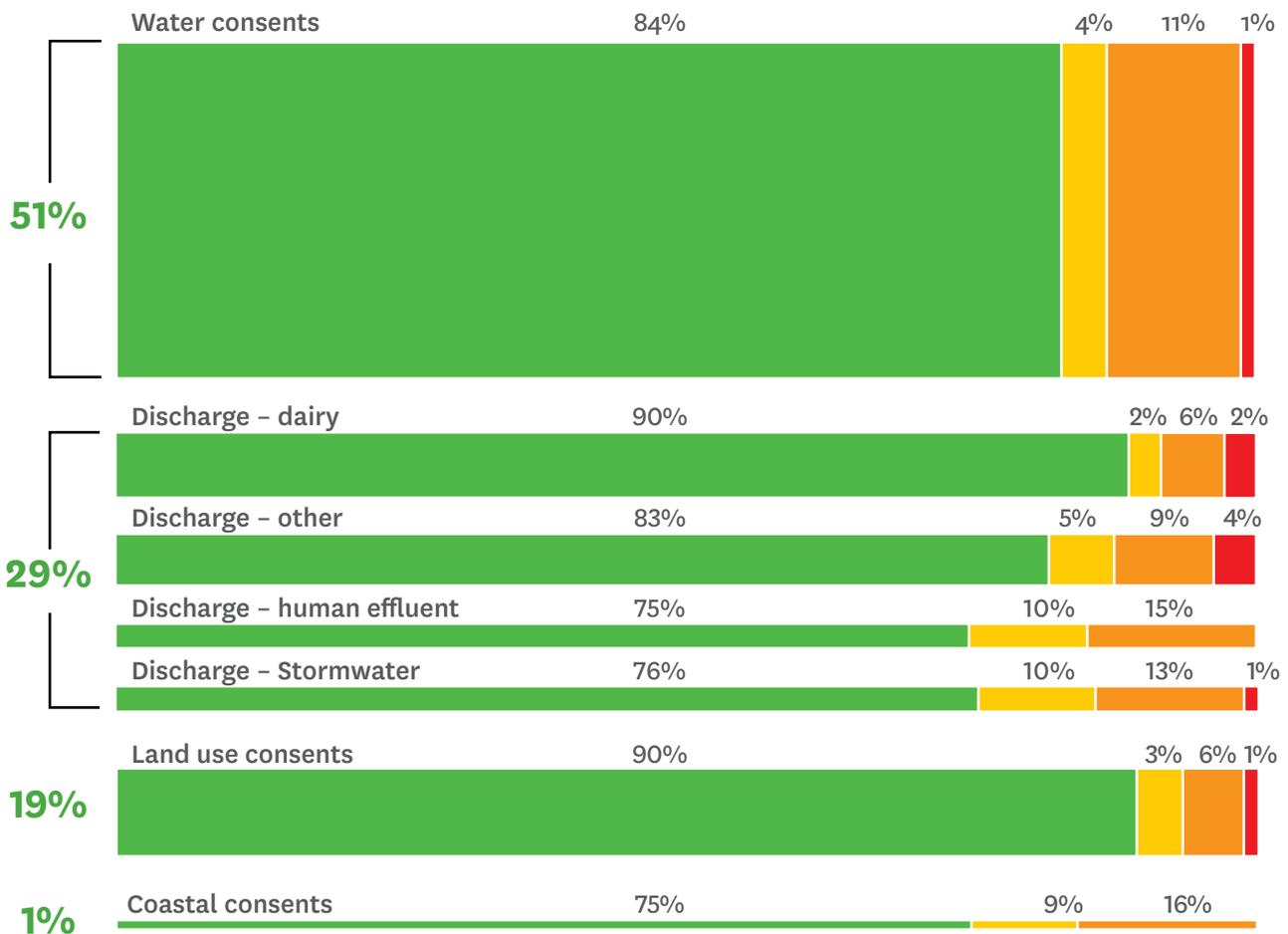
In addition, we used an automated system to check water use data against specific criteria for another 1400 water-use consents.

What we monitored in 2018/19



3,315 consents

excluding 529 which are still in process



Note: Due to rounding, percentages will not always add up to 100% exactly.

In the graph above the 529 consents that are currently still 'in process' are not shown. It only presents data for completed monitored visits.



Full compliance

Full compliance with all relevant consent conditions, plan rules, regulations and national environmental standards



Low Risk Non-Compliance

Compliance with most of the relevant consent conditions, plan rules, regulations and national environmental standards. Carries a low risk of adverse environmental effects.



Moderate non-compliance

Non-compliance with some of the relevant consent conditions, plan rules, regulations and national environmental standards. Some environmental consequence.



Significant non-compliance

Non-compliance with many of the relevant consent conditions, plan rules, regulations and national environmental standards. Significant environmental consequence.

New central manager has bags of rural experience



Central zone delivery manager Andy Barbati's future in Canterbury hung by a thread just minutes after the February 22 earthquake struck.

He was nearly 19,000km from his family and had only been in New Zealand for a matter of months.

The easy decision would have been to pack up and jump ship back to northern Italy with his partner and Springer Spaniel.

But it took the pair just five minutes to make a life-changing decision to stay and make the best out of a terrible situation.

"I just missed the 7.1 (quake) but got the rest, unfortunately," he said.

"I remember straight after the (6.3) quake; my partner and I were in the car and really thought hard about our future.

"We decided we wanted to stay and help with the rebuild of Canterbury. It didn't take us long to come to that decision, really fast in fact," he said.

At the time Andy had just started a job with Environment Canterbury in a monitoring role in the Selwyn-Waihora zone.

Fast forward nine years – Andy is still with Environment Canterbury, having moved up the ranks – in advisory and team leader roles – to now be in charge of zone delivery for Christchurch-West Melton; Banks Peninsula; and Selwyn-Waihora.

"Last month I took the job as the central zone delivery manager. Prior to that, I was in Wales in a similar role, but in waste management.

"All that previous experience has helped me greatly in preparing for this job. It's really helpful as a manager when you're being pulled in all directions, having that knowledge from past positions.

"I mean, projects needing approval, the financial side of things, talking with stakeholders for additional funding, compliance – all sorts really. It can be a challenge at times, that's for sure, but all that previous experience helps you navigate," he said.

Andy said being exposed to monitoring and advising roles early on gave him a better understanding of rural communities and Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) and in particular, putting initiatives in place to achieve outcomes.

"The FEP implementation and auditing was by far the biggest of those projects.

"Another positive thing to happen in Selwyn was building a trustworthy relationship with CPW (Central Plains Water).

"It was really exciting working with them and facilitating the implementation of their Environment Management Strategy," he said.

"I have a great team of people around me too, made up of GIS (Geographic Information System mapping), delivery, the regional support unit, as well as science and planning too," he said.

Another programme close to Andy's heart is the planting programme underway in Whakaraupō / Lyttelton Harbour.

"The planting programme in the harbour is special as I live out that way. It aims to reduce sediment in the water and allow it to revegetate.

The beauty of the harbour is what drew me out there, but the community is what makes me stay," he said.

Every day is different for Andy – even if it may not look it from the outside in.

"Even if I'm supposedly booked out all day it usually doesn't end up that way. Different things pop up across any of the zones and that usually changes my plans for me," he said.

"It was an easy decision for me to go for this job. The zones that we look after are really important to me personally, living in Banks Peninsula and working in Christchurch-West Melton; and in Selwyn-Waihora I used to do a lot of monitoring out there, years back," he said.

Family does cross his mind, but the pull of both job and lifestyle are keeping him away from the northern reaches of Italy for the time being.

"All my family still live in Italy and come to visit every two years or so. I haven't been back in about six years I think, so that could be next on the list.

"I miss the food sometimes, but I've been away for about 20 years now, so I'm pretty accustomed to being away," he said.

You can get in touch with Andy if you'd like help with Farm Environment Plans, compliance, or auditing by emailing andy.barbati@ecan.govt.nz