

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE | DR. B HELEN BEATTIE FOR NZALA

CREDENTIALS AND BACKGROUND

I have been a veterinarian for 25 years. I graduated into mixed animal practice, and have since undertaken a variety of veterinary roles, including being an warranted animal welfare inspector. I had a rural upbringing and I have visited many farms, including in Southland and elsewhere, to observe various intensive winter grazing systems.

KEY ISSUES

It is my view that poor environmental and animal welfare outcomes seen during intensive winter grazing are primarily a result of:

1. a **mismatch between the land's use and its capability** (i.e., wrong farming system for the environment); and
2. **farm system intensification** that pushes the environment beyond the limits of what it can assimilate; often, this also compromises animal welfare; and
3. **siload policy development** (i.e., animal welfare is de-prioritised or forgotten).

Based on current practice, I think it is very difficult, if not impossible, for most intensive winter grazing systems in Southland to meet cattle needs.

Noting the primary mismatch of land capability and use, intensification in many of Southland's farm systems is likely to result in pugging of the soil – that is, cattle trampling leads to the soil becoming a semi-liquid mix of soil, water and effluent (i.e., slurry). This damages the environment and fails to provide a suitable living environment for cattle.

Where intensive winter grazing unacceptably compromises animal welfare, I do not support it.

SELF-REGULATION

Voluntary compliance with farm sector organisations' good management practices (GMP) often fails to deliver appropriate welfare outcomes for cattle. Despite increased public awareness and focus on intensive winter grazing practices, poor welfare outcomes continue to occur as seen in media reports from winter 2023.

Therefore, if PDL's consent is granted, consent conditions are needed to set clear, enforceable expectations that can be monitored.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

To provide acceptable welfare outcomes for cattle, their minimum needs (physical and mental/behavioural) must be met.

1. **Behavioural requirements**
 - a. safe, secure footing to enable flight from real or perceived risk; and
 - b. a socially safe environment (i.e., without undue competition and bullying); and
 - c. a suitable lying surface that meets cattle's *inelastic* lying needs:

- i. enables 10-12 hours of *contented* lying¹ per day;
- ii. will provide an area that is equivalent to no less than 8-10m² per cow;
- iii. has soil dry matter (DM) around 74% DM (at least, greater than 67% DM or DairyNZ's Gumboot Score 2²) as estimated by the 'gumboot test.'³

2. Physical and physiological requirements

a. ready access to water

- i. enough troughs of sufficient size and strategically placed to ensure all cows have functional access to water, without undue competition.

b. a balanced diet

- i. nutritional deficiencies of fodder beet are undisputed;
- ii. long term impacts of fodderbeet are still being investigated;
- iii. appropriate mineral and fodder supplementation needs to be used to ensure cattle receive a balanced diet.

c. access to adequate shelter to ensure thermal comfort

- i. back-fencing must not prevent cattle from accessing shelter, when their lower critical temperature is compromised;
- ii. where such compromise occurs:
 1. the back fence should be removed to allow access to shelter; or
 2. the cattle should be moved to a (sacrifice) paddock with adequate shelter; or
 3. the fencing should be used to allow access to shelter (e.g. via a temporary fence or nearby lane way).

d. a suitable place to calve

- i. cows should be date scanned at pregnancy testing;
- ii. move off crop 14 days prior to that scanned calving date.⁴

These minimum requirements are reflected in the conditions proposed in Mr Hook's planning evidence.

CONCLUSIONS

¹ Chen et al (2017)57

² https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/vqcbletj/gumboot_score_method_chart_sept2022_update_v2.pdf

³ Refer to paras in main evidence

⁴ In accordance with the Taskforce Report, NAWAC's proposed revisions to the Code of Welfare, their recommendations for regulation and Southern Dairy Hub research (*pers Comm.*, Daly (2021))

There is often a correlation between environmental and animal welfare outcomes. Therefore, including animal welfare-focused consent conditions that eliminate or minimise adverse effects on animals, will likely also benefit the environment.

Such conditions would enable better protection of animal welfare through a transparent, measurable, enforceable and proactive mechanism, rather than a reactive enforcement process via the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

If the conditions proposed by Mr Hook are accepted, the welfare of the cattle will likely be better than what would be achieved through the GMP and mitigation measures proposed by PDL which were accepted by the Council officer.

To achieve the best possible animal welfare outcomes, the conditions would go further than those set out in Mr Hook's evidence – they would be fully compliant with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (e.g., continuous access to shelter; a farm system that allow grazing and foraging; cattle living on grass, not mud), and the Code of Welfare | Dairy Cattle.

However, the conditions Mr Hook proposes would significantly improve cattle welfare and for this reason, if consent is granted, Mr Hook's conditions are the minimum that should be imposed.

Where the conditions Mr Hook proposes are included, implemented, monitored and modified as needed (e.g., lying surfaces and access to shelter managed as needed), I do not oppose this consent being granted.

Mr Hook and Ms Nightingale will explain why these conditions are appropriate as RMA consent conditions.