

Intensive Winter Grazing

In Southland, growing annual forage crops for intensive winter grazing is an important activity to manage stock through the winter where there is little or no pasture growth. This practice, while necessary for many farmers, can have serious effects on the environment if not managed well.

Freshwater in particular can be significantly impacted by run-off containing high levels of nutrients, sediment, and pathogens from these paddocks.

There are rules under the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan (Rule 20A) that manage intensive winter grazing. There is also Rule 25 which manages the cultivation of land, including for winter grazing. Currently two pathways are available for intensive winter grazing in Southland.

→ Permitted activity

This pathway allows you to Intensively Winter Graze without a resource consent if you can meet the criteria in the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan. These criteria are set out below.

→ Resource Consent

If you cannot meet one or more of the permitted activity criteria, you will need to apply for a resource consent.

Permitted activity criteria

In order for you to intensively winter graze in Southland without a resource consent, land must have been used for intensive winter grazing between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2019 and the area used must not be increased. You must also meet the following conditions:

- ▶ The area is no greater than 50ha or 15% of a landholding, whichever is greater.
- ▶ A Farm Environment Management Plan is prepared and implemented in accordance with Appendix N of the Southland Water and Land Plan with a winter grazing plan that includes:
 1. downslope grazing or a 20 metre 'last-bite' strip at the base of the slope; and
 2. back fencing to prevent stock entering previously grazed areas; and

3. transportable water troughs.

- ▶ Stock must be kept at least;
 - 20m from the bed of any Regionally Significant Wetlands or Sensitive Water Bodies, nohoanga, mātaítai, taiāpure, estuary or Coastal Marine Area; and
 - 20m from the bed of a lake, river, artificial watercourse, modified watercourse or natural wetland where slope is 10 degrees or more; OR
 - 10m if the slope is 10 degrees or less.
- ▶ Critical sources areas must:
 - be identified in the farm plan; and
 - have stock excluded from them; and
 - have vegetation maintained as ground cover that does not include cultivation or harvesting of an annual forage crop.
- ▶ Land used for winter grazing is replanted as soon as practicable.
- ▶ No winter grazing occurs at an altitude greater than 800m above mean sea level.

Note: Rule 25 of the Southland Water and Land Plan includes the criteria that the slope of the land cultivated for winter grazing must be 20 degrees or less.

If you cannot meet one or more of these conditions, you will need to apply for a resource consent. If you are unsure, please get in touch with one of our consents officers for advice on **0800 76 88 45**.

Common questions and answers

We've listed the answers to some commonly asked questions here. If you're still not sure about what you need to do or have another question you want help with, give our consents team a call on 0800 76 88 45.

- ▶ ***If a river borders my property and I have a permanent fence 5m back, am I expected to set up a temporary fence to maintain the buffer requirements during the winter grazing period?***

Yes. In some cases permanent fences will not align with the buffer requirements, however in order to undertake intensive winter grazing without resource consent you will need to meet the buffer requirements set out above which in this example would involve using temporary fencing.

- ▶ ***I have a swale in a paddock I want to use for intensive winter grazing which is a critical source area. Water running through that area must travel through 160m of paddock in pasture and a sediment trap. Am I allowed to intensive winter graze on the swale?***

No, any area that accumulates runoff from adjacent land and connects or has the potential to connect to a waterbody is a critical source area and is not allowed to be used for intensive winter grazing as a permitted activity. Critical source areas contribute a disproportionately large quantity of contaminants relative to their size to water bodies. Environment Southland still encourages strategies such as sediment traps, wetlands, riparian planting, detainment bunds and denitrifying bioreactors to intercept any contaminants present before they reach waterbodies. A consent application is the process for making case by case considerations, and you could choose to lodge an application demonstrating how the swale could be grazed in a way that avoids risks from the Critical Source Areas and minimises the effects of contaminants on water quality.

- ▶ ***I have areas in my winter grazing paddock which have been left in pasture and not been sown into forage crop as they are steeper than 20 degrees. What can I do with these areas? Can I graze these?***

You are permitted to graze the areas over 20 degrees left in pasture as long as this is not a critical source area or part of a buffer during the winter grazing period. The paddock will need to be carefully managed to ensure there are no discharges to freshwater. All other intensive winter grazing permitted activity criteria should be met.

- ▶ ***What does it mean 'as soon as practicable' when re-establishing vegetation?***

If re-sowing is necessary due to a lack of groundcover, several factors will dictate when it is practicable to sow. These include

soil and weather conditions, paddock contour, availability of machinery and appropriate seed and/or crop rotation implications. Re-sowing should occur either when grazing within any given IWG paddock is completed, or when animals are permanently removed after grazing. Where no plant cover exists, good practice suggests a paddock should be sown with an appropriate species or species mixture that integrates into the whole farm system as soon as soil, weather and operational conditions allow. For more guidance refer to the Ministry for the Environment groundcover guidance.

- ▶ ***How do I know if I have a regionally significant wetland or sensitive waterbody on or near my property?***

Regionally significant wetlands and sensitive waterbodies are listed in Appendix A of the Southland Water and Land Plan. Maps are available on the Environment Southland website or in the online winter grazing and cultivation tool.

- ▶ ***How do I know if I have any nohoanga, mātaītai reserves or taiāpure on or near my property?***

Nohoanga (seasonal occupational sites for food gathering) are listed in Appendix B of the Southland Water and Land Plan. You can check if you have any mātaītai reserves (freshwater and marine areas where a particular Māori tribe has exclusive fishing rights) and taiāpure (coastal fishing areas of significance to Māori on your property by using the online winter grazing and cultivation tool.

Definitions

Intensive Winter Grazing – grazing livestock on forage crops between 1 May and 30 September (inclusive). Annual forage crop – a crop that is grazed in the place where it is grown, other than pasture or cereal crops.

Slope – the average slope over any 20-metre distance.

Critical source area - Landscape feature, such as a gully, swale or depression, that accumulates runoff from adjacent land and delivers (or has the potential to deliver) contaminates to a waterway or subsurface drain.

Please read the plan for full definitions.

