



# Winter grazing

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*Feeding animals over the colder months when grass isn't growing is one of the biggest challenges in farming stock. It's also a time of high risk to animal welfare and environmental outcomes.*

*Making and following a plan for how you manage the risks associated with winter grazing is essential to reducing nutrient and sediment run-off and improving soil productivity.*

## Intensive winter grazing rules

New national winter grazing requirements came into force on 1 November 2022, introducing regulations around what can be done as a 'Permitted Activity' and what needs a resource consent. Farms that don't meet the new Permitted Activity conditions will require a resource consent.

For the purpose of the new regulations, intensive winter grazing (IWG) is defined as grazing livestock (including sheep) on an annual forage crop at any time in the period that begins on 1 May and ends on 30 September of the same year.

We've worked with industry and other councils to put together some further guidance on winter grazing rules, which can be found at [ecan.govt.nz/winter-grazing](https://ecan.govt.nz/winter-grazing)

## Creating and following a winter grazing plan

Whether you're doing intensive winter grazing as a Permitted Activity or applying for resource consent, one thing won't change – you'll need a written plan that clearly identifies the environmental risks associated with the activity, and how you plan to manage and mitigate each of these risks.

Your intensive winter grazing plan will be the key reference you follow over the winter months.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Beef + Lamb NZ and DairyNZ have all developed IWG management templates and guidance documents you can use to make your plan.

## Permitted Activities

A Permitted Activity regulation rule outlines certain conditions that need to be met to operate without consent. You can practice intensive winter grazing (IWG) as a Permitted Activity if you can meet all the following criteria:

- Winter grazing was carried out on your farm between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2019.
- The total area you will use for IWG in the future is no more than the maximum area used in any one year between the above dates.
- The total area of intensive winter grazing on your farm is less than 50ha on a farm 500ha or less; or less than 10 percent of the total farm area on a farm larger than 500ha.
- The slope of land under winter crop is 10 degrees or less measured over any 20m distance.
- All critical source areas within or nearby the winter grazing area are protected, ungrazed, uncultivated and unharvested over the winter grazing months.
- Livestock are kept at least five metres away from the bed of any river, lake, wetland or drain, regardless of if there is water present at the time.
- All reasonably practicable steps are taken to minimise adverse effects from pugging and ensure vegetation is established as ground cover over the whole area of that land as soon as practicable after grazing.

If you can meet all of these criteria, you can practice intensive winter grazing as a Permitted Activity. If not, you will need to apply for resource consent.

## Resource consent for winter grazing

If you plan to conduct intensive winter grazing in 2023 and can't meet the Permitted Activity rules, you will need to lodge a resource consent application by 1 May 2023. You are not required to have been granted resource consent, only to have lodged an application by this date.

Unfortunately, existing farming land use consents and irrigation scheme programmes do not cover the new requirements for intensive winter grazing. If you are already covered by one of these, then you will still need an IWG consent if you don't meet the Permitted Activity rules.

While you won't be granted resource consent immediately, you can still continue with planning and planting for next season and grazing in 2023, as long as you're following your management plan and are consistent with what you've applied for.

A consent application deposit will cost \$3500. The final cost could be more or less, depending on how complicated the consent is to process. You will be billed extra or refunded depending on the final cost.



### Where to get help

#### Check the website

For more information about winter grazing, visit [ecan.govt.nz/winter-grazing](https://ecan.govt.nz/winter-grazing)

#### Industry support

Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Dairy NZ and Deer NZ can all help you with planning for winter grazing and best practices.

#### Talk to your Zone team

Your local land management advisor can help you with advice on how to meet best practices and achieve compliance with synthetic nitrogen use. For support in your local area, give us a call on 0800 324 636. We can arrange for your local land management advisor to contact you by email, phone, or face to face.