Southland Winter Grazing Plan

On the ground action 2025

This winter grazing plan is for break-fed wintering

Crop based wintering, e.g. kale, swedes, fodderbeet
Pasture based wintering, e.g. baleage grass wintering

How this Winter Grazing Plan can help you

By using this guide, you're taking the right steps to continue lifting on-farm winter grazing standards. For farmers in Southland, a winter grazing plan is required to meet the requirements of Appendix N and Rule 20A in the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan. Using this template can support meeting this requirement.

This template is intended to help you develop a simple effective paddock plan this winter for any break-fed wintering system. It will help you to implement good management practices at the paddock level that look after the environment, the stock and the people working within the system.

Why have a winter grazing plan?

- It creates clear expectations for everyone on the farm on how wintering is to be done.
- It identifies areas for improvement.
- It provides proof of good practice (for regulators, processing companies and your farm team).

An effective wintering system:

- Supports good animal health and welfare.
- Minimises soil and nutrient loss to the environment.
- Complies with regional council regulations.
- Protects valuable topsoil.
- Complements the overall farm system and the farm team's work.
- Has a contingency plan for periods of adverse weather.

Please note: *Additional requirements for the wintering plan may be introduced in future to align with the farm's obligations under its Farm Environmental Management Plan.*

Download a copy of this plan online at
www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz/winter-grazing

THRIVING SOUTHLAND
Tōnui ana te whenua. Tōnui ana te takata.
A thriving, prosperous land. A thriving, prosperous people.

Planning your winter grazing

Setbacks from waterways

Southland has specific rules that require vegetated setbacks:

- From the bed of any other river, lake, artificial watercourse (regardless of whether there is any water in it at the time), modified water course or natural wetland
  - 10m when the paddock slope is less than 10 degrees
  - 20m when the paddock slope is more than 10 degrees
- For places of cultural or regional significance, or a sensitive water body, including estuaries and the coastal marine area (as listed in the plan)
  - 20m regardless of slope

Critical source areas (CSAs)

These are areas that collect surface water after rain, and where nutrients can pool and get into waterways or groundwater from these areas.

The proposed Southland Water and Land Plan directs that critical source areas should not be cultivated into winter crops, and they cannot be grazed from 1 May to 30 September.

Direction of grazing

Planning the direction of your grazing can reduce mud levels, creating a better environment for cows and reducing nutrient and sediment loss. Under the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan, farmers are directed to graze downslope or to leave a **20m** "last bite" and graze upwards.

Farmer Tips

"Where practical I graze towards Critical Source Areas and waterways. If this is not possible, I leave a large buffer (at least 25m) and graze away."

"We winter our sheep in blocks and shift them every 4 days. We find that the sheep are more content and there is less soil damage with the longer grazing periods provided the yields are adequate. We check the sheep each day to ensure feeding levels are adequate."

Bale placement

Well considered bale placement can reduce mud in the paddock, reduce how much time stock spend around waterways and Critical Source Areas, and reduce workload for your team.

Farmer Tips

"I keep baleage well away from swales and waterways. I also think about how far my team must carry baleage wrap out of the paddock."

Portable troughs and back fences

A back fence and portable trough will reduce cow movements, and therefore limit soil damage through unnecessary stock movement. Back fences and portable water troughs are a requirement of the Southland wintering rules.

Farmer Tips

"I put my portable trough and pipes along the side fence. This keeps the pipes away from stock and means that we aren't moving them through muddy paddocks."

"Back fences have been a game changer for us. Although it is another job to do, it means that all the stock are up at the feed face which saves energy, and if we need to get them out of the paddock, the back fence makes this much easier."

"We have found that back fences reduce soil damage. Less soil damage means less groundwork and better new grass"

Planning for the weather

Winter weather can play havoc with paddocks, so having a Plan B and knowing when to implement it is critical.

Farmer Tips

"We have a few areas planted in crop that are sheltered. We use these areas for any mobs that need more care – lighter, younger or multiples. The shelter dramatically reduces the energy required to stay warm. Since doing this, we have found that ewes finish winter in a much more even state and are well prepared for lambing."

"We winter on fodder beet. It is too difficult and risky to change the diet, so in poor weather we create a straw bale fence using 4 or 5 bales. This gives the stock shelter, and they lie down in the straw warm and comfortable until the weather passes."

Animal welfare

To ensure your farm team are all on the same page, work with your team to plan in advance about how you will check up on stock, and what to look for.

Farmer Tips

"We check our stock each day to make sure they healthy and well fed. If a team member sees an animal hanging back or with sunken eyes or poor gut fill, we go back and check it later in the day and take them off crop. We aim to notice that the animal is sick before she notices it herself."

Time efficiency

Forward planning can save time over winter and help protect your stock.

Farmer Tips

"We draw our plan on a big farm map as a team initially. As a team, we create the 'master plan' which includes transitioning, animal welfare and our wet weather plan. All paddocks have an individual plan to make sure CSAs and waterways are protected, and it is really clear for the team."

Example wintering plan

Step 1: Farm details

Farm:	WinterStock Limited
Person in charge:	Joe Bloggs
Property Address:	2025 Southland Flat Road, Southland
Farm Size:	200ha
Wintering area:	20ha
No. of paddocks wintered on:	5
Wintering description	Mix of wintering on kale, swedes, Fodder beet and baleage grass. Total of 400 cows wintered.

Step 2: Our farm wintering practices

Executing your paddock plan	
Our transition plan for our stock is...	Kale and Swedes paddocks will be transitioned over 7 days. Fodder beet paddock will be transitioned over 14 days. There is extra baleage in the first two weeks' breaks. Cows will be monitored each day for mastitis, lameness, poor gut transition and general poor health. Any animal that does not adapt well will be drafted out and treated if appropriate. Cows that do not transition will be added to the baleage grass mob.
We reduce mud in the paddock by...	Grazing direction, fencing off wet areas, baleage and water troughs on high areas and small mob sizes (shown in paddock plans).
We monitor animal health and welfare by...	During the morning shift, we will keep an eye on any cows who are slow to come up to feed or are by themselves in the paddock. Monitor the herd during afternoon check – we want to see lying hollows, at least a third of the herd lying down and some feed left in the ring feeders.
We reduce the risk of calving/lambing on crop by...	All cows have been date scanned. Mobs are split by calving date and BCS. Cows will be transitioned off crop 14 days before their due date. Every day we will look for signs of animals springing up and any animals identified will immediately be taken off crop.

We ensure our stock are well fed by...	A feed budget is done prior to the start of winter. We update the budget in late June to ensure we will have enough feed for the winter. We have ten days contingency feed in the budget for wet/windy weather. We also spray paint some baleage bales with dates showing the expected grazing dates. The herd will be checked each afternoon to ensure that there is 1/3 of each baleage bale left and that the herd are content. If not, or if wet/windy weather is forecast, we give the cows extra feed.
We ensure everyone understands this plan by...	The whole team will set up paddock together using this plan as a guide. The team will get a refresher on how to identify sick cows, when to implement the wet weather and adverse weather plans, and the targets of our wintering system.
We will ensure that stock are excluded from Critical Source Areas and Waterways by...	Fencing these off with semi-permanent fences using waratahs and poly wire. If ground conditions are good, Critical source areas and buffers will be grazed in early October prior to regrassing paddocks.

Our plan for wet weather and poor soil conditions	
We will implement our wet weather plan when....	There is a period of cold wet and windy weather forecast.
Our wet weather and poor soil conditions plan is...	Cows will be offered more feed during the afternoon check to ensure they are content and that they have access to a drier lying surface at the feed face. We will have a few baleage bales nearby the fodder beet mob in case of needing extra feed.

Adverse event plan	
We will implement our adverse weather plans when...	There has been, or is going to be, a storm event, or, if it is too wet for the cows to lie comfortably (there are no lying hollows).

Documentation and review	
We will collect evidence to show we are following good management practice by.... Our plan to review this winter's wintering plan is...	We will take photos periodically – before, during and after grazing the paddocks. We aim to show the use of back fences, good buffers, portable troughs and show healthy, content and well fed cows. Throughout the winter we will discuss ways to improve our practices. At the end of winter, we will update our paddock plans with all our ideas and use this to help with next winter's planning.

Please note: *Additional requirements for the wintering plan may be introduced in future to align with the farm's obligations under its Farm Environmental Management Plan.*

Step 3: Individual paddock wintering plan

Paddock details	
Paddock Number/Name	8/example
Size and slope of paddock	4ha, Flat to rolling
Mob name and size:	100 cows, mid calvers, fat condition
Crop type and yield:	12TDM/ha kale
Supplements available:	85 bales laid out + 10 in next door paddock
Diet following transition:	10kg/day kale and 4kg/day baleage (8m crop and 2bales). Approx 45days grazing.
Our transition plan:	Transition over 7days. There is extra baleage in the first weeks' breaks. First day will be four bales and 5m crop.
Areas of paddock that require careful management:	Creek (south) and 2x CSAs.
Day to day management	
Cows will be fed	Daily in the morning and checked each afternoon
Back fences will be moved	2x/wk on a Monday and Friday
Portable troughs will be moved	2x/wk with the back fences

Wet weather plan

If cows are unsettled during the afternoon check, or have finished all of their feed, we will offer them more feed. Feed up to half of the next day's break including the baleage. This will also give the cows access to a drier lying surface at the feed face.

Adverse weather plan

We will move the cows to the Northwest corner of the paddock which is easy to access from the laneway and is sheltered. Extra hay and baleage will be fed to the herd and straw can be spread for bedding if needed. A portable trough will be shifted to their break.

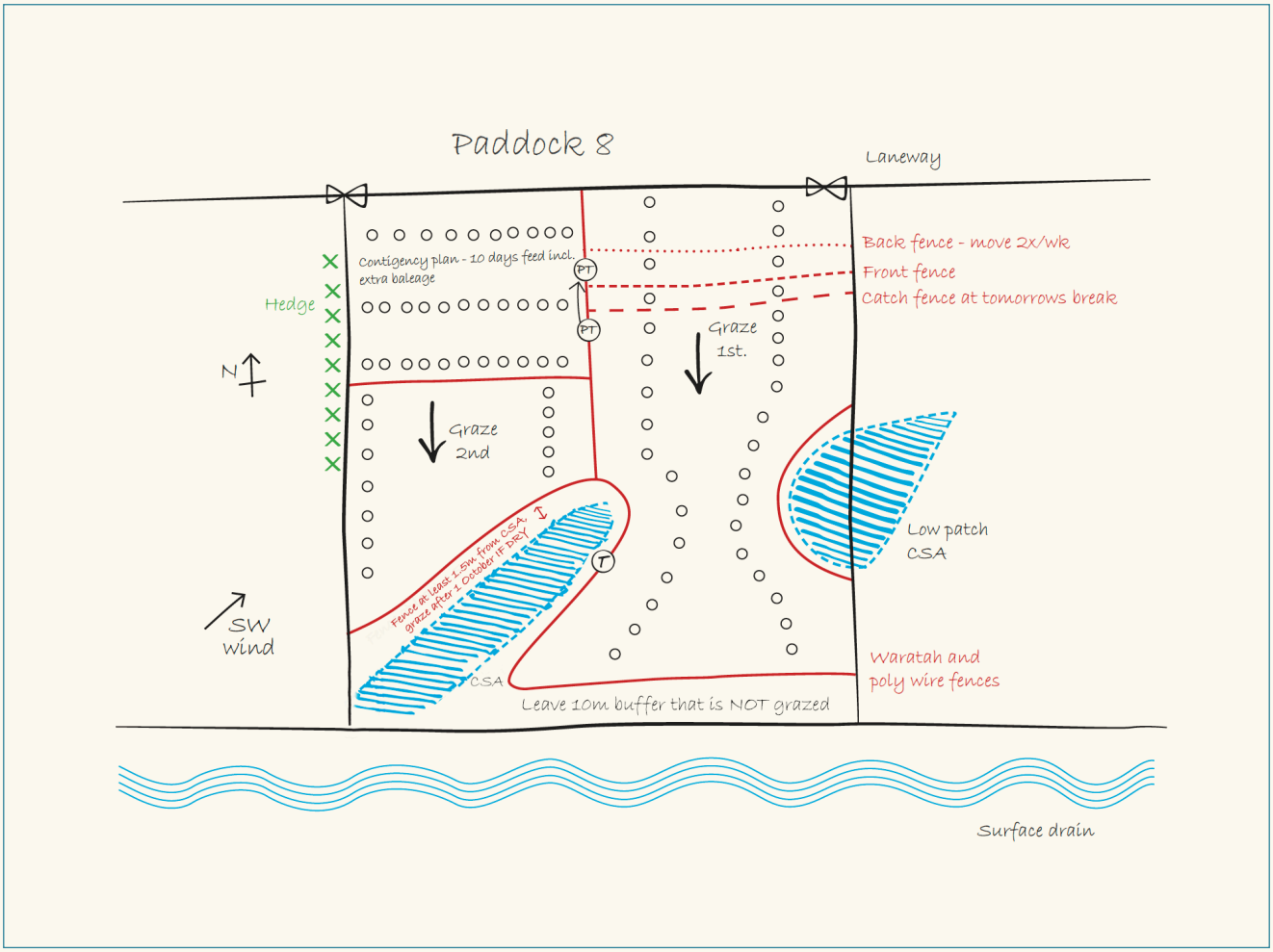
For pasture-based wintering only. Do you intend to have a pasture residual? If so, how will this be managed

NA

Plan for paddock following winter grazing

This paddock will be regrassed in permanent pasture in late October (weather and ground conditions depending).

Step 4: Paddock diagram



STEP 1: Draw an outline of the paddock	Symbol or Complete (tick)
Note map direction (e.g. North arrow)	N
Mark on obvious features (eg hills)	
Direction prevailing wind	SW

STEP 2: Identify risk areas/paddock features	Symbol or Complete (tick)
Critical Source Areas and wet areas	
Areas of slope	
Waterways and wetlands	
Gateways	
Permanent water troughs	T
Shelter	

STEP 3: Grazing plan	Symbol or Complete (tick)
Semi-permanent fences for winter	
Direction of grazing	
Buffer zones to critical source areas/ waterways	
Baleage placement	
Portable troughs and hoses	PT
Back fence	
Front grazing fence	
Break out fence	

Resources to help you plan your approach to wintering

For more information on planning your wintering approach see:

DairyNZ

https://www.dairynz.co.nz/environment/winter-grazing

Beef and Lamb NZ

https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/winter-grazing

Environment Southland

https://www.es.govt.nz/environment/land-and-soil/land-management/intensive-winter-grazing

Add your own favourite resources, numbers and sites:

Farmer Tips *"Some of the Catchment Group members get together to get feedback and improve each other's plans – it's really good to compare notes with other farmers."*

Thriving Southland

https://www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz | 021 466 700

Wintering Plan

Step 1: Farm details

Farm details:	
Person in charge:	
Property Address:	
Farm Size:	
Wintering area:	
No. of paddocks wintered on:	
Wintering description	

Step 2: Our farm wintering practices

Executing your paddock plan	
Our transition plan for our stock is...	
We reduce mud in the paddock by...	
We monitor animal health and welfare by...	
We reduce the risk of calving/lambing on crop by...	
We ensure our stock are well fed by...	

We ensure everyone understands this plan by...	
We will ensure that stock are excluded from Critical Source Areas and Waterways by...	

Our plan for wet weather and poor soil conditions	
We will implement our wet weather plan when....	
Our wet weather and poor soil conditions plan is...	

Adverse event plan	
We will implement our adverse weather plans when...	

Documentation and review	
We will collect evidence to show we are following good management practice by.... Our plan to review this winter's wintering plan is...	

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Paddock Number/Name	
Size and slope of paddock	
Mob name and size:	
Crop type and yield:	
Supplements available:	
Diet following transition:	
Our transition plan:	
Areas of paddock that require careful management:	
Day to day management	
Cows will be fed	
Back fences will be moved	
Portable troughs will be moved	
Wet weather plan	
Adverse weather plan	
For pasture-based wintering only. Do you intend to have a pasture residual? If so, how will this be managed	
Plan for paddock following winter grazing	

Step 4: Paddock diagram

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Note map direction (e.g. North arrow)	
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Direction prevailing wind	

STEP 2: Identify risk areas/paddock features	Symbol or Complete (tick)
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Baleage placement	
Portable troughs and hoses	
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Crop type and yield:	
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Our transition plan:	
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Back fences will be moved	
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Wet weather plan	

Adverse weather plan

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Plan for paddock following winter grazing

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Cows will be fed	
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Adverse weather plan	
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