

Winter Grazing Plan

On the ground action 2024



Farm: _____ Person in charge: _____

Property Address: _____

Farm Size: _____ ha Wintering area: _____ ha No. of paddocks wintered on: _____

Wintering description: _____

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.

We are strongly encouraging all farmers to make use of this Winter Grazing Plan to demonstrate to the Government that there is a commitment amongst farmers to continue lifting wintering standards. It is also a good opportunity to put into practice the wintering regulations (as part of the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) that has come into effect.

<https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/freshwater-implementation-guidance/agriculture-and-horticulture/intensive-winter-grazing>

This template is intended to help you develop a simple effective paddock plan for any break fed wintering system this winter.

This template will help you action good management practices at the paddock level to 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 (including council, your dairy company 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 dairy farm system and the farm team's work
- » » has a contingency plan for periods of adverse weather



Planning your winter grazing

Wintering tips from farmers on areas to focus on*

*(originally published 2021)



Photo credit: DairyNZ

Critical source areas (CSAs)

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

FARMER TIP

"I fence these off with a semi-permanent fence (waratahs and poly wire) at the start of the winter and graze them last when ground conditions are good. If in doubt about where to fence, I fence off a bigger area."

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.

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. I graze the buffer last."

"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 every two days 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 TIP

"I keep baleage away from swales and waterways. I also think about how far my team have to 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.

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

Planning in advance with your team how you will check up on stock, and what to look for helps ensure everyone is on the same page.

FARMER TIP

"We check our stock each day to make sure they healthy and well fed. If a team member sees an animal 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 TIP

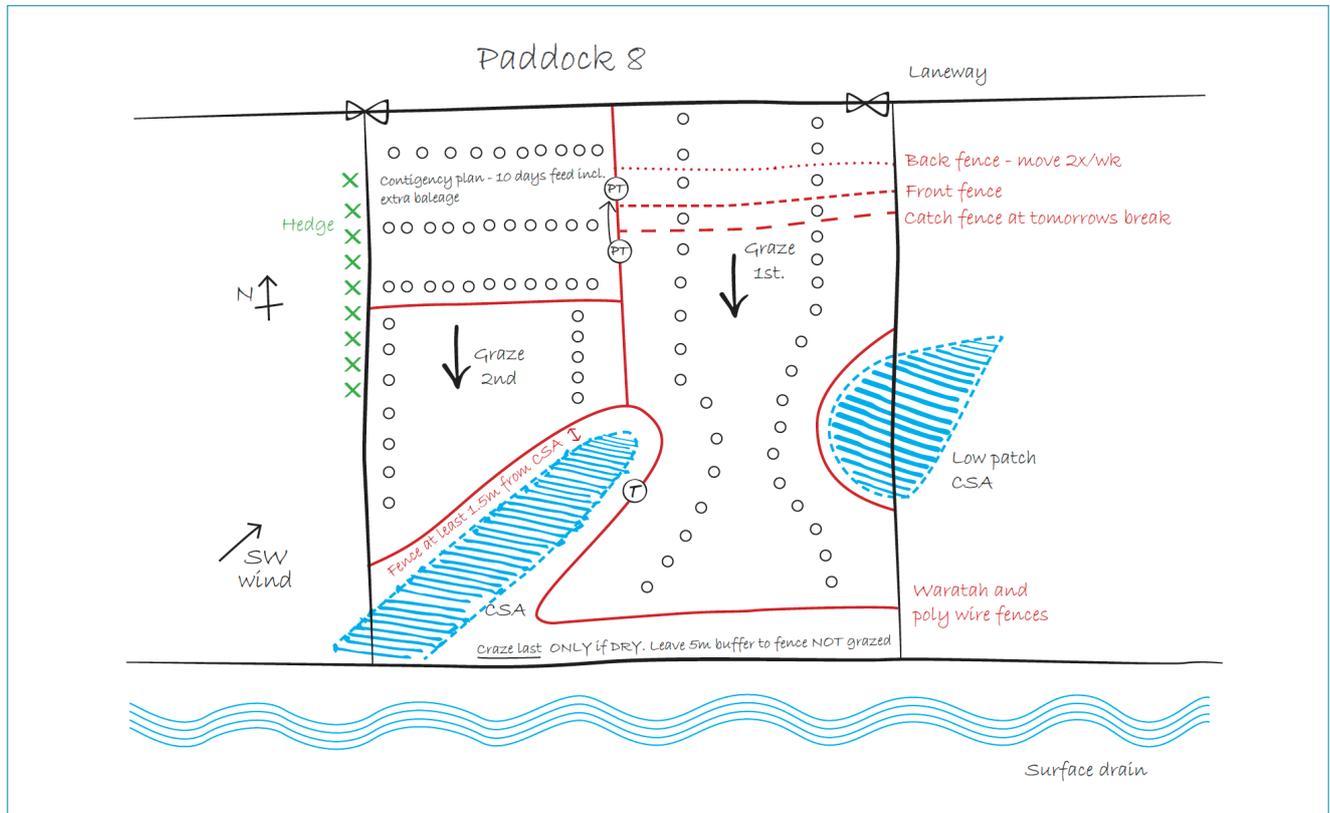
"We draw our plan on a big farm map as a team initially. As a team, we create the 'master plan' which includes transitioning, animal welfare and our wet weather plan. Any paddocks that are a bit more complex or have a different wet weather plan, I later draw individually to make sure CSAs and waterways are protected."



Paddock wintering plan – Example Paddock

Mob name and size: 100 cows, mid calvers, fat condition

Diet following transition: 10kg/day kale and 4kg/day baleage (8m crop and 2bales)



STEP 1: Draw an outline of the paddock	Symbol or Complete (tick)	STEP 3: Grazing plan	Symbol or Complete (tick)
Note map direction (e.g. North arrow)	N	Semi-permanent fences for winter	—————
Mark on obvious features (eg hills)		Direction of grazing	←
Direction prevailing wind	SW	Buffer zones to critical source areas/ waterways	//////
STEP 2: Identify risk areas/paddock features	Symbol or Complete (tick)	Baleage placement	○
Critical Source Areas and wet areas	//////	Portable troughs and hoses	(PT)
Areas of slope	~	Back fence	•••••
Waterways and wetlands	~~~~~	Front grazing fence	- - - - -
Gateways	⊗	Break out fence	- . - . - .
Permanent water troughs	(T)	STEP 4: Day to day management	
Shelter	X	Cows will be fed	Daily in the morning and checked each afternoon
		Back fences will be moved	2x/wk
		Portable troughs will be moved	2x/wk with the back fence



STEP 5: Executing your paddock plan

Our transition plan for our stock is...	<i>Transition over 7days. There is extra baleage in the first weeks' breaks. 1st day will be 4bales and 5m crop. 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</i>
We reduce mud in the paddock by...	<i>Grazing direction, fencing off wet areas, baleage and water troughs on high areas and small mob sizes</i>
We monitor animal health and welfare by...	<i>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.</i>
We reduce the risk of calving/lambing on crop by...	<i>All cows have been date scanned. Mobs split by calving date and BCS. Cows will be transitioned off crop 10-14 days before their due date. We will look every day for signs of animals springing up and any animals identified will immediately be taken off crop.</i>
We ensure our stock are well fed by...	<i>A feed budget is done prior to the start of winter. We update the budget in late June to ensure we will have enough crop 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.</i>
We ensure everyone understands this plan by...	<i>Whole team will set up paddock together using this map as a guide. The team will get a refresher on how to identify sick cows, when to implement plans, and the targets of our wintering system.</i>

STEP 6: Our plan for wet weather and poor soil conditions

Our wet weather plan will be implemented...	<i>As per paddock 5 plan - If there is a period of cold wet and windy weather forecast</i>
Our wet weather and poor soil conditions plan is...	<i>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.</i>

STEP 7: Adverse event plan

We will implement our adverse plan when...	<i>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).</i>
Our adverse event plan requires us to...	<i>We will move the cows to the North west area of the paddock which is easy to access from the laneway. Extra hay and baleage will be fed to the herd and straw can be spread for bedding if needed. We will ensure animal welfare requirements continue to be met by.. Shelter: Hedge along west of paddock Lying time: High and dry area of the paddock Access to water: Portable trough can be set up quickly Feeding: Ad lib feed will be made available (hay and baleage)</i>

STEP 8: Documentation and review

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





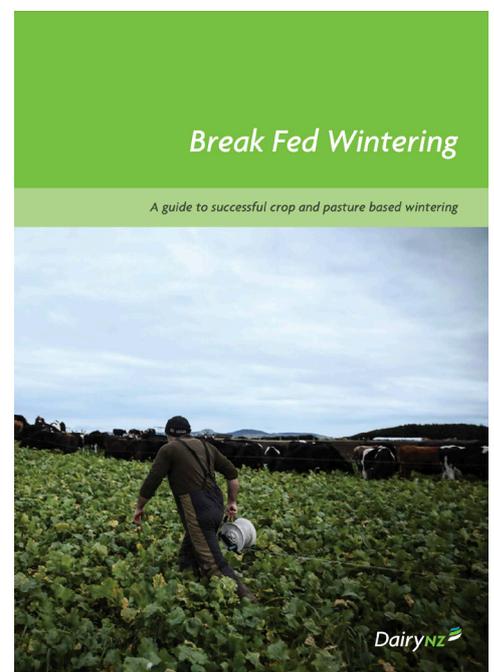
Resources to help you plan your approach to wintering

For more information on planning your wintering approach see:

- » DairyNZ – Break Fed Wintering guide [HERE](#)
- » Beef and Lamb NZ – Winter grazing site [HERE](#)
- » MPI - Winter Grazing Action Group report on short term animal welfare expectations at [MPI.GOV.T.NZ](#) search for ‘winter grazing action group animal welfare’
- » MPI - Codes of welfare for dairy cattle, sheep and beef cattle and deer [HERE](#)
- » ENVIRONMENT SOUTHLAND - Intensive winter grazing 2024 [HERE](#)
- » Your local regional council website for any regionally specific rules and support.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A SECOND OPINION ON YOUR PLANNING:

Ring your local DairyNZ Consulting Officer (on 0800 4 324 7969), regional council, farm consultant, technical field rep or Catchment Group Coordinator.



Paddock wintering plan for paddock number _____

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Diet following transition: _____

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Areas of slope	
Waterways and wetlands	
Gateways	
Permanent water troughs	
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	
Back fence	
Front grazing fence	
Break out fence	

STEP 4: Day to day management	
Cows will be fed	
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STEP 5: Executing your paddock plan

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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...	

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