

27 April 2021

Intensive Winter Grazing Module

Key Messages & Frequently Asked Questions

Key Messages

- A module has been published by MPI and MfE containing guidance, practical planning advice and mitigation options to improve winter grazing practices and benefit freshwater quality and animal welfare.
- The module includes an easy-to-use template for farmers who do not already have a plan for their winter grazing activities.
- If farmers have an existing plan based on a council or industry body template it should be updated to reflect any additional expectations set out in the module.
- It is also important regional councils' current rules on intensive winter grazing (IWG) are complied with.
- It's expected regional councils and industry bodies will update their guidance and farm plan templates, if necessary, to ensure they are consistent with expectations in the module.
- In March, the Government deferred the introduction of IWG practice regulations for a year until May 2022.
- It's intended that the module will be incorporated into broader freshwater farm plans when they begin to be rolled out from early 2022.
- From next May 2022 when IWG rules in the National Environmental Standards for freshwater are reapplied, if a farmer cannot meet the permitted activity standards, they will need to either obtain a resource consent or have a certified Freshwater Farm Plan. The IWG module itself will not be an alternative to a resource consent.
- The module has been developed by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Ministry for the Environment (MfE), councils and industry representatives.
- Regional councils and industry bodies will work together with farmers to implement and deliver positive change on the ground.
- Farmers may notice extra monitoring this winter.
- In Southland, staff from MPI and Environment Southland will be proactively visiting farms which may pose animal welfare or water quality risks to ensure they have effective plans in place to manage IWG, especially during periods of heavy rain.
- There are two hotlines for people who have concerns. 0800 FARMING is supported by industry and councils and provides an opportunity for the community to give feedback. People can also call MPI's animal welfare hotline on 0800 00 83 33.

Q&As:

I have already planted and started grazing my winter crops, is this module too late?

We understand your winter crops are already in the ground. This module highlights practical solutions you can take to mitigate the effects of grazing livestock on fodder crops during the winter months. They include things like:

- grazing crops growing on a slope from the top down
- using portable water troughs to minimise livestock movements
- identify Critical Source Areas and keep livestock out of them
- leaving a buffer of at least five metres next to waterways
- having a plan to manage severe weather events
- ensuring animals have suitable areas to lie down
- quickly planting a cereal catch crop once the fodder crop is grazed to mop up surplus nitrogen.

How does this module fit in with my existing farm plan?

You can continue to use your existing plan, but you should make sure it is updated to reflect the expectations set out in the Intensive Winter Grazing Module.

How does this module relate to future freshwater farm plans?

The regulations to support mandatory freshwater farm plans are still being developed and expect to be in place early 2022. Using this IWG module will help you start the journey to getting a certified freshwater farm plan. It is expected that this new template, or any updated farm plans reflecting this module, will form a key part of your future freshwater farm plan.

Who has the Intensive Winter Grazing Module been developed for?

The module outlines nationally consistent practice expectations for winter grazing. It can be used by anyone undertaking winter grazing. It is expected that regional councils and industry bodies will use the module to ensure that their current guidance and farm plan templates are consistent with the expectations set out in the module. You should be able to meet the expectations by updating your plan using the module or by accessing the updated guidance provided by your industry body or regional council.

What do I do if I read the IWG Module and realise I have planted my crop in a Critical Source Area (CSA)?

The module outlines practical solutions to mitigate the effects of grazing your fodder crop in the winter. It is important livestock are kept out of Critical Source Areas. The module also provides guidance to help plan for better planting locations in future winter seasons.

Do I follow the guidance outlined in this module, or the rules set by my regional council?

It is important you comply with your regional councils' current rules on intensive winter grazing (IWG). It's possible their rules could be more stringent than the guidance outlined in this module. You must follow any local rules that may be relevant to your activity and gain a consent if required. Your module cannot be used as a replacement for a consent. However, your updated plan may be

able to be used to support you to meet local rules or apply for a consent application if one is required.

Why should I use this module?

The module can be used by anyone undertaking winter grazing. It's an excellent starting point if you don't currently have a written plan. The module includes an easy-to-use template. The guidance is designed to improve practices and benefit freshwater quality and animal welfare. It will also help make improvements to your operation and ensure you are well prepared for when wider freshwater farm plans are rolled out in early 2022.

What should I do if I do not already have a farm plan?

The module includes an easy-to-use template you can fill in to plan your winter grazing activity for this season. You can use this template, or you may wish to use one of the templates provided by your relevant industry body, or regional council if appropriate. Whichever template you use, you should make sure that your plan includes measures to provide suitable space for livestock to lie down and adequate shelter during extreme weather events.

If I have a plan based on the Intensive Winter Grazing Module does that mean I do not need to get a consent when the national IWG regulations are re-applied?

The Intensive Winter Grazing Module is non-regulatory. This means that you must still meet one of the three pathways under the national regulations once they are re-established. These pathways are:

- Meet the permitted activity standards under the regulations; or
- Have a certified freshwater farm plan, which demonstrates the effects of your activity will be no more than if you met the permitted activity standards; or
- Apply for a resource consent.

Certified freshwater farm plans under Part 9A of the RMA are expected to begin to roll-out from early 2022. You will be able to use the plan you create using the IWG Module to inform the development of the IWG component of your freshwater farm plan.

What kind of monitoring is going to be done?

It's likely you will notice extra monitoring this winter. In Southland for example, staff from MPI and Environment Southland will be proactively visiting farms which may pose animal welfare or water quality risks to ensure they have effective plans in place to manage IWG, especially during periods of heavy rain. If you don't already have a plan, the template in this module will help you plan, monitor, check, record and review your winter grazing practices. Other councils may also increase their monitoring this season, and supporting farmers to comply with regional rules.

Who developed this module?

The module has been developed by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Ministry for the Environment (MfE), councils and industry representatives to help improve practices and benefit freshwater quality and animal welfare.

Is this module the module that Ministers announced would be developed?

Yes. This is the module the Environment and Agriculture Ministers announced would be rapidly developed and deployed with industry and regional councils.

What is intensive winter grazing and why does it matter?

Intensive winter grazing is a farming practice where large numbers of stock (cattle, sheep, deer) are confined over winter to small outdoor feeding areas planted with fodder crops (e.g. swedes, kale, and fodder beet).

It is widely acknowledged that, if done poorly or too extensively, the activity has serious negative effects on both animal welfare and the environment, particularly freshwater and estuary health. The amount of intensive winter grazing has increased significantly over the past 20 years, particularly in Southland because of low rates of winter pasture growth. The Government has addressed both the animal welfare and freshwater health concerns, with overlapping benefits.

Where do I go if I need help or support?

If you have any questions about your winter grazing practices or your plan for the coming winter, you should contact your farm adviser, Deer Industry New Zealand or your regional council. A hotline (0800 FARMING), which is supported by industry and councils, is being provided as an opportunity for the community to give feedback. People with concerns about animal welfare are encouraged to call MPI's animal welfare hotline on 0800 00 83 33.

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NB: Minor edits by DINZ 5 May 2021