

Creating a Winter Grazing Management Plan

Include the following information in a word document and add information tailored to your farm system

Paddock selection

- Try to select paddocks that do not have critical source areas (low lying parts of the farm such as gullies and swales where water congregates), waterways, other natural drainage or artificial drainage, or areas significantly vulnerable to pugging.
- Select paddocks with soil types that are suitable for winter crops.
- Select paddocks where the animals can lie at rest on firm dry ground.

Critical source areas and waterways

- If a critical source area is present within a crop paddock, leave a grass buffer strip of 5 – 10m
- Exclude stock from any waterways by fencing off, and leaving a grass buffer strip of 5 – 10m.
- Strategically graze areas near critical sources or waterways.

Grazing management

- Avoid wet areas as much as possible.
- Back fence to reduce animal movement that results in damage to soils.
- Have a catch/safety fence in front of the feeding face to minimise the impact of overfeeding if stock break out.
- Use narrow breaks with long fences that are moved frequently to improve feed utilisation.
- If possible, leave any critical source areas un-grazed with grass buffer. If you must graze the critical source area, do this strategically by grazing it last and quickly when it is drier.
- Have a stand-off area when paddock gets heavily pugged.

Crop establishment

- Direct drill where possible.
- Leave critical source areas uncultivated if practical.

Adverse weather

Have a contingency plan if bad weather occurs including an area for standing off/ sacrifice paddocks to ensure animal welfare and environment is protected.

Feed Allocation/Animal health

- Ensure that all the cows get the right amount of feed every day and constant access to water.
- If there is a sick cow, lame cow or cow that has slipped/ aborted she is moved to a sacrifice paddock.
- Make sure cows are transitioned on and off the crop correctly to avoid animal health issues.
- Where possible, plant crop in paddocks with good shelter. Alternatively, allow a feed buffer in your budget to account for feeding extra on cold, wet or windy days.
- During cold, wet and windy conditions, make sure cows don't become susceptible to cold stress.
- Make sure cows always have access to fresh water.

Post Grazing Management

- Ensure that paddocks are not left in fallow for a long period of time to reduce the risk of overland flow and leaching.
- Consider catch crops to take up any urinary nitrogen left from the winter grazing.

Plan ahead and document

- Document (photos, diary) your winter grazing season to show good management practices are being implemented
- Use this plan for next year (including things you could do better next season).

Map

Add to following to a winter grazing map

- ⇒ Any sacrifice paddocks/ gravel pit
- ⇒ The crop paddocks and type
- ⇒ Entry and exit points
- ⇒ Water troughs
- ⇒ Critical source areas (swales and gullies)
- ⇒ Waterways



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If you need any help with creating a Winter Grazing Management Plan please to contact us: