



# FACT SHEET

APRIL 2021

## TEN TOP TIPS FOR WINTER GRAZING OF CROPS

This factsheet focuses on good management practices. For the most up to date regulation information, please visit our website: [beeflambnz.com](http://beeflambnz.com)

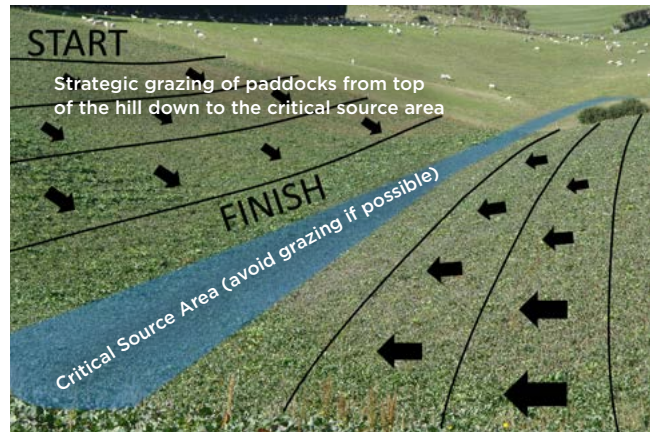
Winter grazing of crops can be a significant source of sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss from farms. Reducing losses from winter crops can go a long way to reducing total farm losses.

With a few simple steps, you can make a real difference now!

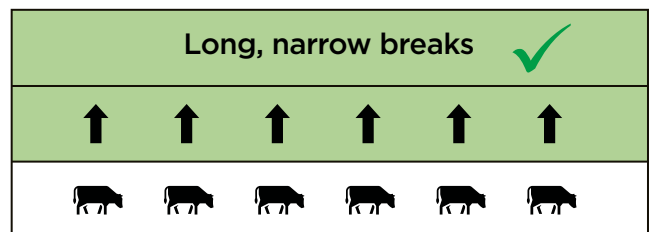
Soil is our greatest asset, holding on to more of it makes good economic sense. Damage to soil from poor grazing management of winter crops will impact on the future productivity of that paddock. Too much sediment and nutrients in waterways impacts on their ecology and can kill freshwater species.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

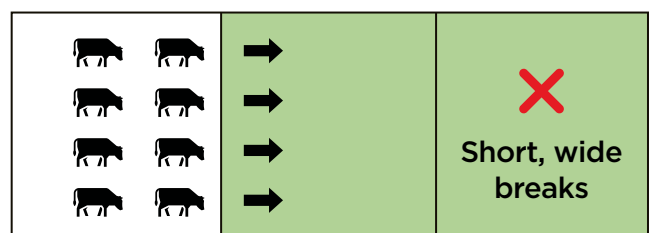
- 1 **Exclude stock from waterways.** 5 metres is the regulatory required minimum but this should increase with slope and instability of soil. Ideally, this area is also uncultivated and left in grass to function as a filter. Check your regional regulatory requirements about stock exclusion from waterways.
- 2 **Leave an ungrazed buffer zone around critical source areas (CSAs).** These are places on the farm where contaminants concentrate and they can get into a waterway. Areas such as gullies, swales, very wet areas, spring heads, waterway crossings, stock camps and vehicle access routes. Where possible, leave CSAs uncultivated and ungrazed with pasture cover left intact to act as a filter. If the CSA is cropped, only graze lightly and when soil conditions are suitably dry to prevent pugging, soil damage and contaminant loss.
- 3 **Graze paddocks strategically.** On a sloping paddock, fence across the slope and start grazing at the top of the paddock, so the standing crop acts to reduce overland transport of contaminants. Or, if there is a waterway present, start grazing at the opposite end of the paddock. The general rule of thumb is: if it is too steep to get a wheeled tractor on, it is too steep for a forage crop.



- 4 **For cattle, make breaks long and narrow** to utilise crop more efficiently and reduce feed wastage.



Use long and narrow breaks for cattle



*Final cattle grazing event in a winter crop. The cattle were grazed down the slope in long and narrow breaks. An uncultivated and ungrazed buffer strip was maintained around the critical source area on the right hand side of the paddock.*



- 5 Back fence.** Regularly backfence sheep and cattle off previously grazed breaks to help minimise pugging damage and to reduce runoff risk.
- 6 Place troughs and supplementary feed in a dry central part of the paddock** well away from any waterways or critical source areas. Ideally use portable troughs and feeders so they can be moved to reduce pugging risk and make back-fencing easier to manage.
- 7 Look after your stock.** Allow them time to transition to the new diet and ensure they have adequate feed, shelter, and access to drinking water. This will help to reduce crop and soil damage by limiting stock movement.
- 8 Don't graze the buffer strips around critical source areas** until the paddock is resown into pasture and the risk of contaminant loss into the CSA has reduced.
- 9 Plant a catch crop** or resow as soon as possible after grazing is completed. This will help to reduce nitrogen loss and can also reduce sediment loss by stabilising the soil. Check your local regulations about resowing dates. When resowing, consider planting a fast growing crop in spring such as greenfeed oats.
- 10 Plan early.** When choosing paddocks for next year's winter feed crop, think about how you can improve your management of critical source areas and waterways. This may include considering if there are better paddocks to use that are not as risky. Also plan ahead for large storm or snow events and know where you will put stock and how you will keep them fed and watered.

## Additional information and acknowledgements

This fact sheet documents some of the findings made in the Pastoral21 research programme.

### Other B+LNZ resources available on our website include:

Farm Plan – Natural Resources & factsheets, videos and podcasts available on [beeflambnz.com/wintergrazing](http://beeflambnz.com/wintergrazing). These are also available as hardcopies, to request a hard copy email [resources@beeflambnz.com](mailto:resources@beeflambnz.com).

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**READ**

B+LNZ Factsheets on good management practice for winter grazing. Email [resources@beeflambnz.com](mailto:resources@beeflambnz.com) or call **0800 233 352**.



**LISTEN**

AgResearch soil scientist Ross Monaghan discusses winter grazing on a B+LNZ podcast: [beeflambnz.podbean.com](http://beeflambnz.podbean.com)



**DISCUSS**

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