



Healthy Farms Healthy Rivers

NEWS

Good pasture growth rates in April and May have lifted pasture covers around the region. This is most welcome after a prolonged and widespread drought. If we can avoid too many frosts and excessively wet weather through winter, lambing and calving will look promising.

In this issue we see a collaborative effort producing menus of practices to improve water quality. We look at the collaborative approach to be taken for developing changes to the regional plan to address water quality issues, and we consider stock wintering management and its role in protecting soils and spring pasture growth.

Menus of practices to improve water quality



Waikato Regional Council and industry partners have recently launched a set of menus of practices for improving water quality for dairying, drystock and cropping.

The menus provide a range of practices and use the latest research to rate their effectiveness at reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and micro-organisms entering waterways. The cost and benefit on the farm business are also indicated.

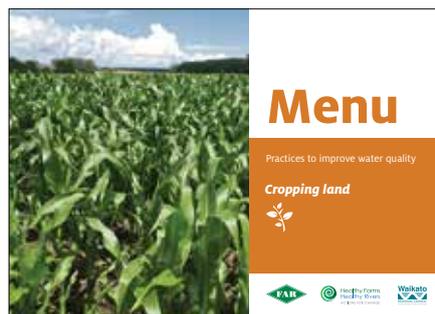
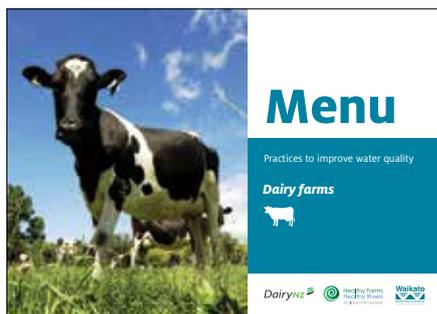
The menus were developed initially in response to requests from Integrated Catchment Management project farmers. Waikato Regional Council developed the menus together with DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Foundation for Arable Research, Fonterra, Federated Farmers Waikato and Rotorua-Taupo branches, AgFirst, Ballance Agri-Nutrients and Headlands.

The menus help farmers to make choices about what practices best suit their

farming circumstances. They are best used in conjunction with a nutrient budget and farm system analysis, with input from a farm consultant.

Although produced for the Waikato, the menus are useful for farmers and farm consultants around New Zealand, and a number of organisations from outside the region are interested in using them.

You can view the menus and order copies at www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/menus or on freephone 0800 800 401.



Collaboration over restoring and protecting rivers

Collaboration with stakeholders is to be a key feature of moves to restore and protect the health of the Waikato and Waipa rivers, under the *Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change/Wai Ora He Rautaki Whakapaipai* project.

The project partners, Waikato and Waipa River iwi and Waikato Regional Council, will work with stakeholders to develop changes to the regional plan to help reduce sediment, bacteria, nitrogen and phosphorus entering water bodies, including groundwater, in the Waikato and Waipa river catchments.

A collaborative approach is essential due to the complexity of the challenge: addressing water quality issues while at the same time minimising economic impacts.

A key element of the collaborative approach will be a collaborative stakeholder group. This group will represent stakeholder organisations and the community, and will be the main channel for their involvement in developing solutions. It will comprise representatives from farming, forestry energy, tourism, business, councils, tangata whenua and environmental and recreational interests, as well as community members.

Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change/Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapaipai is needed because the Government's *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011* requires councils to set objectives, limits and targets for all water bodies. In addition, the *Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River/Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato* must be given effect to by regional and district plans within the rivers' catchments. Other drivers include policy effectiveness reviews, water quality monitoring results and stakeholder and community expectations.

Read more about *Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change/Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapaipai* and sign up for updates at www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/healthyivers.

Managing winter stock to protect soil

Now is a good time to think about managing winter stock to protect soil and speed up recovery from the drought.

With soil moisture levels returning to normal, soils are likely to reach saturation during winter.

Saturated soils are particularly vulnerable to pugging and compaction, which will reduce their biological activity, reducing grass growth in spring and beyond.

Paddock areas used for stand-off are even more vulnerable. If compaction, and, more seriously, pugging occurs, future production from these areas is greatly compromised. Further, serious pugging from sacrifice paddocks under heavy rainfall events increases the risk of contaminant discharge to streams and thus could be a breach of the rules.

Good planning can prevent damage to saturated soil. This includes planning for on-off grazing of winter crops and using stand-off loafing pads and animal housing. In the worst weather and if no other farm infrastructure is available, stand stock on the milking yard or feed pad for



Winter pugging reduces subsequent spring grass growth

short periods. Long term thought needs to be given to integrating winter crops into a system that avoids winter crop environmental hotspots. Crop utilisation will improve as a result.

Break feeding grazing stock using a hot wire down, not up, a slope reduces sediment and phosphorus loss from the farm, particularly when grazing winter crops.