

The Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region

Livestock access to waterways, wetlands and estuaries ...



Historically, livestock have been able to access waterways on farms for many reasons. However, livestock in our rivers, streams, wetlands and estuaries can be a source of disease, sediment and nutrients.

The need to manage livestock access is recognised in the strategies and plans of groups such as DairyNZ, Beef and Lamb, Deer Industry NZ, NZ Pork and Federated Farmers.

What are the existing rules?

The Regional Freshwater Plan for the Wellington Region is the current plan that contains rules for the protection of water quality and aquatic ecosystem health. Although this plan does not have a specific rule for livestock access to waterways, the general rules require that livestock access does not result in adverse effects. The lack of specific rules has resulted in uncertainty for livestock owners and the public.

When do the proposed rules come into force?

All rules in the Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region (proposed Plan) came into effect from 31 July 2015. The proposed rule for livestock access, Rule R97, clarifies the existing general rules for the protection of water quality and aquatic ecosystem health and includes general conditions that must be met immediately. The proposed rule also includes specific conditions that must be met for the protection of high value areas by 2018 and specific conditions that must be met for other areas by 2022.

Please see the full rule, including definitions, schedules and maps at www.gw.govt.nz/proposed-natural-resources-plan/

In general terms, proposed Rule R97 states that:

- At all times, livestock must not create significant pugging of a river, stream or lake bed, other than at a defined stock crossing point. In addition, livestock access to any waterway must not create a conspicuous change in downstream colour or clarity.
- By 1 August 2018, most livestock must be excluded from high priority sites. Livestock, other than sheep, must be excluded from the significant wetlands listed in the proposed Plan.
- By 1 August 2022, cattle, farmed deer and farmed pigs must be excluded from rivers, streams and drains that are wider than 1-metre on lowland properties, water races, identified estuaries and scheduled trout habitat areas.

Regional plans are developed under the Resource Management Act to help regional councils carry out their functions to sustainably manage the physical and natural resources in the region. Wellington Regional Council has five operative regional plans: the Regional Coastal Plan, Regional Freshwater Plan, Regional Soil Plan, Regional Air Quality Management Plan and Regional Plan for Discharges to Land. Until a decision has been made on the proposed Plan, resource users must comply with rules in the proposed Plan and rules in the five existing plans.



Permitted: no resource consent is required provided you comply with the conditions in the rule.

Controlled, discretionary or non-complying: a resource consent from Wellington Regional Council is required. Conditions may need to be met.

Prohibited: the activity cannot be undertaken at any time.



What does 'high priority' site mean and how will I know if I have one?

The proposed Plan identifies high priority sites in definitions, schedules and maps. For livestock access, these sites include waterways that have significant cultural or biodiversity values, or are upstream of community drinking water supplies. Most land owners with a site in the waterway on their property have already been contacted by Wellington Regional Council.

Wellington Regional Council will help livestock managers confirm the location of high priority sites on specific properties and develop livestock management plans. Assistance for fencing and managing these sites may also be available.

Do livestock need to be excluded from all wetlands?

Most of the remaining wetlands in the Wellington Region are considered to be high priority sites. Livestock, other than sheep, will need to be excluded from those wetlands listed in the proposed Plan by 2018.

What about break-feeding?

Break-feeding is where livestock are fed on pasture or forage controlled by the frequent movement of an electric fence. Where this occurs, proposed Rule R95 requires a 5 metre set-back from water bodies and that sediment-laden water from break-feeding does not flow to the water body.

Do I have to fence my waterways?

There is no requirement to permanently fence livestock out of waterways. Practical methods to exclude livestock are appropriate, including relying on natural features of the land, such as bluffs and rocky areas, or the use of temporary electric fencing.

What about drinking water for my animals?

The Resource Management Act is clear that rules cannot be used to restrict the taking of freshwater for the reasonable needs of livestock as long as it does not, or is not likely to, result in an adverse effect on the environment. Excessive or wasteful taking of water is restricted by rules in the current and proposed plans.

There is a lot of information to understand in the proposed Plan so if you need help to figure out if your activity is permitted, or requires a resource consent, or if you have any questions at all, please contact us for more information 0800 496 734 or regionalplan@gw.govt.nz

