

SUBMISSION TO
THE MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

on

Action for healthy waterways

From the New Zealand Deer Farmers Association



31 October 2019

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1. Introduction and background to the New Zealand Deer Farmer's Association (NZDFA)

- 1.1 The New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) in response to the consultation document "*Action for healthy waterways*" (MfE publication number: ME 1427).
- 1.2 New Zealand has the world's largest farmed deer industry. The main products marketed are venison and deer velvet antler. Approximately 95% of products are exported. In the year ending 30 September 2018, deer products were worth \$322 M in export receipts to New Zealand and the industry at present is showing some small expansion.
- 1.3 The NZDFA is a voluntary annual subscription-based industry-good body established in 1975 as an Incorporated Society to act for deer farmers as producers in the best interests of the NZ farmed deer industry. within the context of wider New Zealand agricultural directions, policy and ambition.
- 1.4 It is estimated that 80% of deer farmers also farm sheep and or cattle and have good working relationship and affiliation with Beef and LambNZ.
- 1.5 The NZDFA is nationally governed by an elected 4-person Executive Committee (including a Chairman) from nominees within NZ's deer farming community and Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) levy payers. The Executive Committee members are all active and experienced deer farmers
- 1.6 Regionally the NZDFA has a nationwide presence through 18 individual NZDFA Branches. While the Branches are most numerous in the North Island with ten, the seven South Island Branches contain 63% of the active moderate to large deer farms (1322) with 829 of these in the South Island predominately (761) In Southland and Fiordland (226) Otago (139) and Canterbury /South Canterbury (396)
- 1.7 The NZDFA business is serviced through a producer management portfolio housed within and funded via levies collected by DINZ. The NZDFA through its Selection and Appointments Panel appoints 4 of the 8 DINZ Board members in the process outlined in the DINZ (2004) regulations.
- 1.8 The DINZ Board and DINZ Executive team maintain a close working relationship with NZDFA and in 2016, responding to the NZDFA request to provide a formal executive position (Environment Stewardship Manager) established within DINZ to lead and coordinate the combined industry's environmental stewardship programme and include the DFA nationally and via the branches.
- 1.9 DINZ was established under Deer Industry New Zealand Regulations (2004) under the Primary Products Marketing Act 1953. DINZ's functions (under regulation 5(1)) include the following:

- a. to promote and assist the development of the deer industry in New Zealand;
 - b. to monitor, and from time to time report on, the economics and efficiency of all components of the deer industry; and
 - c. to report from time to time to the Minister and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade on movements of costs and prices or other factors likely to affect the economic stability of the deer industry.
- 1.10 The industry is the youngest pastoral-based industry in New Zealand (the first deer farm licence was issued in 1970) but provides diversified markets and additional revenue to and complementary land use with other pastoral farming industries.
- 1.11 The deer industry shares environmental and other producer-based activity with all the other pastoral-based industry bodies but has affinity with the drystock sector as:
- i. Deer farms tend to be multi-species (*i.e.* deer are farmed along with sheep and/or beef cattle);
 - ii. products derived from deer farms are similar (venison alongside beef and lamb, annual velvet harvesting alongside wool),
 - iii. deer farms occupy the same land classes and run similar production systems (breeding, venison finishing/velvet) and have similar levels of inputs.
- 1.12 For this reason this submission is confined to issues that will particularly impact on deer farming, but the NZDFA wishes to note that it supports the submission from Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) and has been closely associated with DINZ's own submission on "Action for healthy Waterways" and its development and supports that submission in its entirety
- 1.13 The NZDFA wishes to be heard in support of this submission.

2. Scope of Submission

- 2.1 NZDFA will confine the submission to the following proposals:
- 2.2 **Draft National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management** – alignment with the DINZ submission and endorsement of B+LNZ submission.
- 2.3 **Proposed National Environmental Standards for Freshwater.** The submission covers the following
- Part 2, sub part 1
- a) Wetlands
- Part 3 subparts¹ Various proposed clauses as follows:
- a. Feedlots (Clause 27)
 - b. Sacrifice paddocks (Clause 28)
 - c. Other stock holding areas (Clause 29)
 - d. Intensive winter grazing (Clause 30)
 - e. Freshwater module of farm plans (Clauses 37 – 41)
 - f. Nitrogen Cap (Clauses 42 – 48).
 - g. Draft stock exclusion regulations

Consultation document:

NZ Deer Farmers Association submission

Part 2 Subpart 1

3. Wetlands

- 3.1 The New Zealand Deer Farmers Association understands the importance of safeguarding the remaining wetlands in New Zealand and the vital role that they play in filtering our water systems and the many important plant and aquatic species they contain.

Farmers should be encouraged to restore wetlands where applicable or maintain existing ones. But the proposed rules relating to wetlands require many resource consents to facilitate this process.

- 3.2 While it is vital to ensure protection of wetlands from development activities, for farmers who want to create new or improve existing wetlands, NZDFA believes that they should be encouraged to do so by having local regional council expertise and professional help easily available. If our farmers must apply formally and expensively

for resource consents to undertake the considerable practical effort and expenses to complete these properly for these activities it will simply put them off doing the right thing. For example, in Marlborough we are advised that a resource consent can range from \$5000-\$10000 and currently takes up to 2 years for resolution).

We are also aware that a deer farmer in Canterbury wished to enhance an existing wetland while removing an established drain (i.e. disconnecting the drain and reestablishing inflows to the wetland as it was originally) but found this problematical due to presence of native fish species in the drain and the expensive consent process that would then result.

If advice is made freely available it will encourage people to safeguard their wetlands in contrast to reaction where too many regulatory roadblocks will mean that the right advice won't be sought and mistakes will be made and unwittingly risks taken for what is to be a critical and permanent project not just for the farmer but for their farming community and water catchment.

For this and many other farming activities national and regional government in our view needs to invest resources in support and advice services for farmers at this specialised end that complements the practical services and advice from the various livestock and other farming industry bodies.

Part 3 Subpart 1

a) Clause 27 Feedlots

NZDFA perspective

- 4.1 The proposed NES-FW makes no reference to the purpose and instead defines it in terms of two criteria: Duration of confinement (80 days in a 6-month period) and feeding regime (hand- or mechanically-fed). Our concern is by using this definition captures wintering barns/sheds that are successfully used by some deer farmers in the lower South Island – particularly in Southland.
- 4.2 The MPI Code of Welfare (Deer) 2018, developed in association with the deer industry) sets out precise requirements related to such in wintering facilities related to physical construction standards, stocking density, feed and water minimum standards, health and welfare needs for this practice which has been running successfully since the 1980's, (Sec 4.3. Minimum Standard No 6- Holding facilities (Pg17-19)
- 4.3 Wintering barns are used to house deer (typically mixed aged stags) over the winter (up to 90 days) where they are hand or mechanically-fed. The purpose for using wintering barns is to ensure that deer have access to adequate feed during times when pasture growth is minimal and pasture damage is likely if animals continue to

graze in the open and – more importantly, pasture growth is then compromised in the following spring/summer.

- 4.4 Mixed aged stags are the heaviest stock class for deer so are likely to create more soil damage in wet conditions. Further, deer do not produce much weight gain over winter, so the productivity aim for using barns is more to maintain weight and condition over winter.
- 4.5 In terms of environmental outcomes wintering barns are quite different from beef feedlots:
- Wintering barns result in less area used for winter grazing.
 - Deer effluent and dung is less than those of beef (or dairy) and are captured by bedding material in the barn. There is no leachate and the dry bedding material is applied over the paddocks when the barn is no longer needed and when weather conditions allow (once the deer return to the paddocks, the bedding can remain in the barn with no risk of leachate loss).
- 4.6 NZDFA agrees with the DINZ submission and wishes that the clause for defining a feedlot to:
- **Extend the confinement period to “more than 90 days”** (typically the longest period used in Southland deer wintering barns).
 - **Include the primary aims for the use of a feedlot** ((finishing an animal prior to slaughter)).

Such that wintering barns or sheds are not included in this standard.

b) 28. Sacrifice Paddocks

5.1 The proposed rule states ‘This is a permitted activity as long as

(a) it is sited at least 50m away from waterbodies, water abstraction bores, drainage ditches and coastal marine areas.

(b) It does not include any critical source areas.

5.2 The NZDFA accepts that this makes sense except for the rule requiring a 50m separation zone of from waterbodies and drainage ditches. In common practice a sacrifice paddock is no greater risk than a cultivated forage/crop paddock for winter grazing that has a rule requiring a setback with winter grazing stock, which require a vegetated strip a minimum of 5m from any waterbody or drainage ditch.

5.3 A sacrifice paddock is grassed, adjacent /nearby to the current winter crop and in need of renewal. It will be a selected part of a crop transition and wintering rotation. Apart from having no critical source area, should there be any minor at-risk areas common practice over winter would be to temporarily fence these out from stock access with

the same temporary electric fences being used to break feed winter crops. The advantage of a sacrifice paddock is that it can be a safer refuge in bad weather than maintaining the herd on the crop and more confined in space and choice.

Relief requested This permitted activity needs changes to align with rule 30 Intensive winter grazing (1) (e) that requires a minimum 5m set back from water bodies and drainage ditches.

c) 29. Other stock holding

Restricted discretionary activity

(1) Holding stock in a stockholding area for more than 30 days in a 12-month period, or for more than 10 consecutive days, is a restricted discretionary activity.

:

- 6.1 A stock holding area is defined as “...*a permanent or semi-permanent area, covered or uncovered, that is constructed to hold livestock at a stocking density that precludes the maintenance of pasture or vegetative groundcover, and:*
- a) includes feed pads, winter pads, standoff pads, loafing pads; but*
 - b) does not include areas used for animal husbandry purposes, such as stockyards, milking sheds, or woolsheds.”*
- 6.2 This proposed clause affects deer wintering systems particularly in the southern part of New Zealand where deer, mainly MA stags and hinds are wintered in barns or pads for periods up to 90 days. For many this is a very good environmental alternative to winter crop and in areas where it is prevalent such as Southland, where it is a permitted activity, it only requires a consent when there are 250 animals or greater on one site. (Figure1)
- 6.3 The effluent (dung and urine) from deer is nothing like that from cows or cattle. In fully covered barns with straw, sawdust or wood chips, the bedding stays dry all winter, (Figure 2) then is taken from the shed and usually muck spread onto cultivated paddocks, to be worked in. As you can see by the attached photo it is very chaff-like when spread out and nothing like a liquid high-volume effluent.

Figure 1. Modern Indoor wintering barns for deer. Southland (Housed Mixed-age stags)



Figure 2. Deer shed bedding spread on ground (left) to be worked post winter.



6.4 In pad type areas where deer might have a loafing barn or dedicated resting area, the animals eat from a constructed self-feed silage stack with a moveable feed through gates system or baleage in purpose-built feeders.

The NZDFA believes the same permitted rule should also be applied, with the relevant criteria around distance from water and the requirement that any contaminants are kept within the site.

Many other uncovered pad situations fall under proposed Rule 28 “Sacrifice paddocks” as defined meaning “a paddock used temporarily to hold stock in such a way that the pasture is likely to be severely damaged and will require pasture renovation” which are also permitted activities in Southland.

6.5 The NZDFA believes that alternatives to grazing animals on winter crop *in situ* should be encouraged by having good rules around them as an established as a Permitted Activity. The NZDFA believes it is only necessary to concentrate on larger scale numbers and sites under the Resource Consent process.

6.6 NZDFA notes that this definition may also capture self-feeding silage pits that are commonly used in deer farming. Self-feeding silage pits are used for the same purpose as feed pads or winter pads, so will have similar environmental risks (with respect to siting and managing leachate). However, deer social and feeding behaviour reduces some of the risks associated with this practice compared with feed pads or winter pads used by other livestock species.

Two examples of deer self-feeding silage pits are shown here:

Figure 3 (Courtesy DINZ submission From the Deer industry code of environmental management 2018)



- The pit has a concrete base and is located at the top of a hill.
- To the right is a woodlot that the deer will spread out in when not actively feeding.
- See page 44 of The Deer Industry Environmental Management Code of Practice (2018).
- Additional good practice would be to install a sump to collect the leachate.

Figure 4 Self feeding silage movable pit feeding control barrier



And also illustrated here:

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/agribusiness/95913721/feed-problem-solution-means-happy-farmers-and-deer>

6.7 A key feature for self-feeding silage pits is that the deer are only confined at the feeding face, and they require unimpeded access to a paddock or other “run-off” area such as a woodlot or disused quarry area or equivalent that allows the herd to spread out to rest and ruminate when not feeding. Deer browse rather than graze, so feeding is not a prolonged activity and there is a strong social hierarchy within the herd that allows timid or younger animals to have their own opportunities to feed to appetite while the balance of the herd is resting.

6.8 **Resources.** The NZDFA contributed experience and advice in the writing of the “Deer Industry Environmental Management Code of Practice 2018” that was published and distributed by DINZ in 2018

<https://www.deernz.org/deer-hub/farm-environment/environmental-management-code-practice#.XboQoZlzaUk>

Like DINZ, NZDFA considers there is sufficient guidance in that industry publication as well as the special single topic pages and “Deer Facts” that have been produced on best practice for winter feeding : Protecting waterways from wallow and feed pad run-off” as well as readily available industry support and advice that further minimise the risk that self-feeding silage pits pose to water bodies.

- 6.9 **The NZDFA seeks clarity that self-feeding silage pits will not require a restricted discretionary activity consent.** Currently the wording in the proposed standards is ambiguous: “*Holding stock in a stockholding area for more than 30 days in a 12-month period, or for more than 10 consecutive days, is a restricted discretionary activity.*” (Clause 29(1), page 14).

As self-feeding silage pits are only enclosed by three sides and deer are free to come and go, NZDFA assumes this does not result in deer being “held” in the area. Further while access to the silage pit is likely to be more than 10 consecutive days, this is not continuous (i.e. 10 consecutive days refers to 240 consecutive hours, rather than for example, 30 hours spread out over 10 days).

d) Clause 30. Intensive Winter Grazing

7.1 The Rule

Permitted activity

(1) Intensive winter grazing on a farm is a permitted activity if it complies with the following conditions:

- a) the grazing does not take place on land with a slope equal to or greater than 10 [15] degrees;
- b) the grazing does not take place over more than 30 ha [50 ha] or 5% [10%] (whichever is greater) cumulatively or in one contiguous area of the farm;
- c) any grazing on sloping land takes place progressively downhill from the top of the slope to the bottom of the slope;
- d) stock is not grazed in any critical source area;
- e) a vegetated strip of at least 5 m [20 m] that does not include any annual forage crop species is maintained between the grazed area and any water body or drainage ditch, and all stock are excluded from this strip during the grazing;
- f) the grazed paddock is re-sown within 1 month, or as soon as practicable, after the end of the grazing;
- g) pugging to a depth of more than an average of 20 cm [10 cm] does not occur over more than 50% of the paddock.

Figure 5&^6. Southland winter crop feeding: break fencing, paddock layout and buffer margins. Hinds On Swedes and break fence .



- 7.2 In the view of the NZDFA, the criteria that trigger a resource consent requirement is established at an extremely low decision point. In our view it should be at least 100ha or 12% of total farm area or when paddock slope averages 20 degrees and over. We note also that on the extensive large properties where overwintering on crop is a common and well managed process the area in crop can be considerable in itself and be confined to the lower specially cultivatable parts of the property and can exceed the ha limitation although remain a small fraction of the operation
- 7.3 The suggested lower values of 5% or 10%; 30ha or 50 ha; or 12.5 degrees and over would trigger applications for numerous Resource Consents for processing within the Regional Council's systems affecting most farms with winter crop.
- 7.4 In our view Regional Councils do not have the resources for this potential number of consents. The NZDFA believes that a farm's winter grazing programme should be a permitted activity with set criteria around that and regional resources should be concentrated on overseeing the large-scale areas or high percentage of crop areas which are the greater risk.
- 7.5 The burden over compliance greatly risks significant disruption in farmers' ability to get crops planted on time as timing is critical for germination, growth and yields and adds unwanted costs with Regional Councils who inevitably also seeking full value cost recovery for the required Resource Consents. Many councils monitor winter grazing with fly overs or others means to target people that are infringing at levels beyond the permitted activities.
- 7.6 Part (b), The definition of "contiguous", is problematic as many farms will have blocks that are close by but not physically connected. If you separate these blocks, they total a high percentage but in the overall farm system the percentage is below the threshold. To identify independent winter grazing blocks, specified minimum kilometre distance from main block is required or as an alternative discard the percentage terminology and use the total area of hectares involved to define its risk assessment.
- 7.7 Part (1c) 1 This rule states that any grazing on slope ground takes place progressively downhill from the top of the slope to the bottom.

While this can work in many circumstances in some cases it is impractical with stock pushing fodder crop and soil downhill causing soil damage and crop wastage. In addition, in practical terms can be hard to keep behind a 1.5m electric fence on a steeper slope.

For example, by leaving the steeper parts of a paddock until the later winter or early spring to graze when ground conditions are dryer is recommended by industry. Giving stock larger breaks when on these steeper areas will reduce soil damage improve crop utilization.

This rule needs more flexibility in its intent, for as long as it achieves the result of stopping the movement of sediment downhill and threatening waterbodies, the farmer is upholding his/her part of this permitted activity.

- 7.8 Part (e) which states “a vegetated strip of at least 5m (or 20m) between grazed area and any waterbody is required” would be problematic if the 20m rule was enacted.

The NZDFA submits that 20m is excessive in many deer farming and other dry stock situations, as many paddocks will have a considerable range of variable slopes within a single paddock. We believe that farmer’s own knowledge and discretion of the amount of buffer required to be effective should be for the farmer to decide. We accept the aim of 5m is a viable construct but believe it will need to be larger for steeper at risk slopes. Using arbitrary distances that don’t reflect the variabilities of paddocks is a blunt rule that doesn’t hand any flexibility and responsibility to the farmer in our view.

- 7.9 1(f) States that “a grazed paddock is to be re-sown within 1 month or as soon as possible”.

The NZDFA has significant concerns related to the practicality of this rule

While we accept that this is generally a feasible task in warmer parts of the country as grass can be sown quickly or crops are put in earlier to beat dry spells, further south, where considerable numbers of deer are farmed (South Canterbury, Otago and Fiordland/Southland contains approximately 40 % of all farmed deer), crops often aren’t sown until later November or early December due to wetter ground conditions.

Practically this is further complicated by the reality that if crops are sown too soon in these areas they will go to seed too early in the winter and lose feed value and palatability.

- 7.10 (g) “pugging to a depth of more than an average of 20 cm [10 cm] does not occur over more than 50% of the paddock.

The NZDFA opposes this subclause rule related to pugging and suggests while endeavouring to mitigate soil damage and possible animal welfare issues, the practical application will be very hard to apply.

In very wet winters the amount of pugging can be hard to control but it is best for farmers to ensure they have a grazing system that reduces the impact which will also incorporate the potential of run off blocks or standoff pads when weather events preclude responsible winter grazing and break fencing.

e) Subpart 3 – Freshwater module of farm plans FW-FP

8.1 **In general:** The NZDFA agrees that formal Farm Environmental Plans (FEP and transition to FW-FP) are a very useful planning and on farm management tool for the farmer to clearly define their farm's environmental situation and the associated mitigation plans. The plan creates the means to prioritise critical risks of action and to put these into a well thought out ongoing management system. At the same time FEP and FW-FP will form the practical basis for working within the local Regional Council rules and timetables.

8.2 We believe that the farmer is the best person to complete their own farm plan outside the nutrient budget.

While some farmers will employ professionals to write their whole plan, this can lead to indifferent buy in by the farmer who may not have had working input into the realities of a plan. This is not just a tick box exercise, as it must continue to evolve and be refined as seasons change and the impact of ever-increasing application of best practice and become a formal but normal part of good farming business

8.3 Most industries, including the Deer Industry, have good support systems, enabling farmers to complete a plan. Professional help can be used if needed but it is vital that farmers put their own plans together as they are the best placed to understand their farm, their financial situation, and how to prioritise the mitigations. Under such a regime farmers also become more innovative and can develop their own practical ideas that evolve via experience and from other initiatives seen through the deer industry's network of NZDFA field activities and DINZ's Deer Industry Environment Groups that are flourishing across NZ as part of the Passion to Profit (P2P) Primary Growth Partnership

8.4 The deer industry has allocated considerable resources to support its farmers. It launched its formal Environmental Management Code of Practice in 2018 to help all its members in on farm mitigations, education on environmental issues and provided a template for putting their farm plan and practical implementation together.

(Reference <https://www.deernz.org/deer-hub/farm-environment/environmental-management-code-practice#.Xa6CKJlzaUk>)

8.5 Alongside this resource DINZ and the NZDFA run workshops in conjunction with Beef and LambNZ for farmers to develop their own FEPs but with a deer specific emphasis.

8.6 As mentioned above the industry have also set up Deer Industry Environmental Groups (DIEGs) of 6-10 farmers in regional locations using the collaborative approach by visiting each other's farms to discuss issues and work the most practical mitigations and through this process put an effective long term environmental plan together.

- 8.7 Our industry has many of its members with a plan well under way and plans for a large percentage to have a completed plan by the end of 2020, with full compliance targeted for 2023 alongside B+LNZ's goal. If industry led initiatives like this one are overridden by high level compliance that doesn't take into account farmer and industry problem solving expertise that momentum will be diluted at best and risk being lost or alienated.
- 8.8 All the criteria listed in the freshwater module for farm plans (FW-FP) are being implemented in these industry-based plans now. There are also huge number of condensable activities that are proposed to be part of a plan. DFA believes that these should be cut dramatically as many should be permitted activities with set rules around them.
- 8.8 **In summary** The NZDFA believes that Farm Environmental Plans are a great way to educate farmers on their risk profile and then allow them to describe and document formally what are the risks and priorities and then most importantly how they plan to implement the required mitigations.

But it should not be a requirement that these plans have to be compiled by a professional as a mandatory input, as this will add unnecessary costs and bureaucracy. We also doubt that there are sufficiently qualified professionals available for the task and this resource will certainly never complete the task in the 2-year time frame.

The NZDFA contends that for effective progress and buy in if farmers are left to take ownership and seek the professional advice and direction where needed the best results and action will be the outcome and this will also establish a pattern of ongoing continual improvement. Plans will be completed more quickly especially with industry support. In the view of the NZDFA, MfE should be encouraging and supporting industry initiatives like these, not overriding them with unneeded levels of compliance.

Part 3 Sub part 4

f) Nitrogen Reductions

Option 1 Nitrogen loss cap in high nitrate nitrogen catchments (From the discussion document)

- 9.1 We understand and support the idea of targeted reduction of the top percentage of high nitrogen loss farms in the high nitrogen level catchments is reasonable, depending on how these actual at-risk catchments over all loading works is determined.
- 9.2 We submit that the threshold must be set low enough to allow farms at the lower end of nitrogen use room to increase N use if needed.

While this might seem at contradiction to the broad aim of reducing nitrogen loss, many farms with very low nitrogen loss might be viable due to low or no debt but they would be of no value for someone if sold as they could be entirely unprofitable without some increase in inputs.

- 9.3 Low input farms should not end up being the victims as the issue of high nitrogen loss in a catchment is the result of systems with extremely high inputs and resulting high outputs.

Option 2 National nitrogen fertiliser cap

- 9.4 While controlling nutrient inputs sounds like a good idea but will be hugely complicated and impractical to police. Using Overseer to monitor inputs will be easier and it allows farmers to understand their overall results so they can then have the flexibility to make the adjustments to inputs where they think they are appropriate to get the required result.
- 9.5 We believe the proposed timetables for establishing completed and effective nutrient budgets in the at-risk catchments are totally unrealistic essentially with the lack of available qualified people. to assist and drive this programme

g) Draft stock exclusion Section 360 regulations

- 10.1 The NZDFA acknowledges and supports the proposed rule that divides water ways into that one metre and greater and those less, but the rule itself must be enacted to make sure there is enough flexibility.
- 10.2 The mapping of all farms into the 4 zones 0-5, 6-7 and 8-10 and 11 degrees and greater in our view is arbitrary because of the highly variable nature and change of topography in short distance for many farms and particularly deer farms in the lowland hill and high country. Land that can be designated low slope, can equally have steep slopes amongst it. Similarly, parts of an extensive farm with low stocking rates can have low slope areas with waterways over one metre wide.

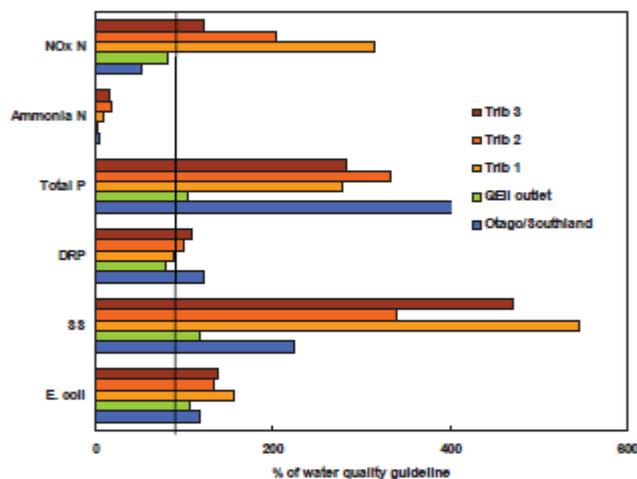
In our view low slope should be defined as 5 degrees and less.

- 10.3 Deer fencing is very expensive at \$20- 25 and upwards per metre installed. On extensive farmland with lower stocking rates, it is simply impractical to fence everything. It is more realistic to concentrate on fencing waterways out lower in the catchment and lower down using filter areas with sediment traps or natural wetlands to mitigate contaminates. This has been well documented in the Otago Focus farm era in the early 2000's in a project combining AgResearch, The DFA and DINZ and The Otago Regional Council and Telford polytechnic demonstrating successfully just how effective that mitigation is. The Plan as outlined in the consultation document plan does allow for this flexibility to be shown through farm plans.

Water quality on the Southland deer focus farm

Environment Southland has tested the water quality of three tributaries to a 5ha tussock QEII reserve and the water quality after the stream passed through the reserve over the past three years.

Figure 1: Median concentrations of water quality parameters at four sites in the Southland deer focus farm and from sites monitored in Otago and Southland relative to Australia and New Zealand guidelines for good water quality in lowland streams



The graph shows that the three tributaries have poor water quality. This is probably due to a number of wallows near or on each tributary. The QEII covenanted area cleaned the water to meet all but total phosphorus and E. coli guidelines.

The fenced-off riparian reserve has been established for a number of years and shows no sign of losing mitigation efficiency. Consequently, the Southland deer focus farm exhibits an example of good management practice, but additional measures should be adopted to ensure good water quality in the future.

(Excerpt from "Focus on Deer. An update from the Otago and Southland Focus Farms. Issue 9 – September 2008)

- 10.4 In the discussion document feedback is requested on riparian fencing. In our view It should be measured from the high-water mark of the waterway. The 5-metre distance is needed in cases of slope or higher banks but on creeks on very low slope with very short banks many farmers should deem it to be too large. Hence therefore many already have fencing in place at 3m (which was the standard for some regional councils). This fencing should not have to be moved if it achieves its purpose or in the case of intensive stocking i.e. winter grazing, temporary electric fencing can be erected further out to achieve enough set back.

- 10.5 The discussion document also understates the true nationwide cost of riparian fencing. While a large amount has already been completed it takes huge resources and time to achieve this. What is not considered is the associated immediate need to also install equally costly and time-consuming stock water reticulation systems as every paddock that has waterways fenced needs alternative stock water. Further, the costs of that can be very expensive with deep bore drilling required for enough water in some cases plus all the trough piping and installation costs that go with it. In many parts of the country, availability of fencing contractors is extremely limited in the same way as qualified nutrient advisors or farm plan consultants.
- 10.6 The time frame of all one metre and greater waterways fenced on low slope by 2025 is unrealistic in our view and we believe needs an extension to by 2030 due to the above issues stated above.
- 10.7 The use of stocking rates on farm or at paddock scale is a good idea depending how it is applied, and assumptions are correct. We presume the standard MPI stock units are being used as it is not stated in the document.
- 10.8 It is stated that at the paddock scale if the capacity rises to 18SU/ha or greater, stock should be fenced out of waterways on these higher slope properties. In our view it should stipulated that this is the case on these farms when animals are in intensive winter grazing systems on grass or fodder crop, because that is the high-risk period for lower stocked farms when stock are mobbed up during the winter period.
- 10.9 As an observation in the document general stock exclusion requirements part (c) states that 'landowners may seek an exemption from stock exclusion requirements or an extension of the phase- in time frames. This seems realistic on the surface but there is no further detail or explanation on the requirements for this.

NZDFA Summary overview of proposed National environmental standards for freshwater.

- 11.1 While we in the deer industry and particularly within the NZDFA understand the need to address the environmental issues that the standards target, we have great concern of the detailed depth and prescriptive rules and requirements that these proposals express.

Many of these rules go into the details that many Regional Council plans have already in place, but totally override them if they are less than any of these standards.

Most Regional Council plans went through a long and very costly submission and then environment court processes in which all organisations and individuals had a good chance to have input into the rules. Additionally, many regions have totally different climates, geography and environmental issues to deal with as well.

This proposal totally undermines the constructive outcomes of that regional process by the prescriptive weight and depth of the detail the proposal has outlined which is also aggravated by the very short time frames in which to respond.

The NZDFA reflects it is one thing setting regionals targets to improve their status but submit it should be left at the local regional level to plan and direct how they will implement the mitigations and meet those targets.



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