ADVERTORIAL

Final cattle grazing event in a winter crop of kale. The cattle were grazed in this critical source area for 3-4 hours when soil conditions were relatively dry underfoot, then removed from the paddock to reduce risk of further damage to the soil.

TEN TOP TIPS FOR WINTER GRAZING OF CROPS

Winter grazing of crops is a key source of sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss into waterways 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!

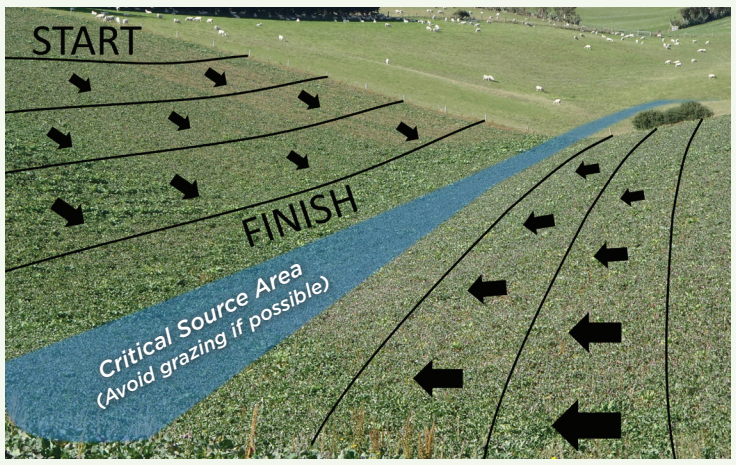
Soil is our greatest asset, holding on to more of it makes good economic sense. Damage to soil from poor grazing management of winter crops will impact on the future productivity of that paddock. Too much soil and nutrients in waterways impacts on their ecology and can kill freshwater species.

What can you do?

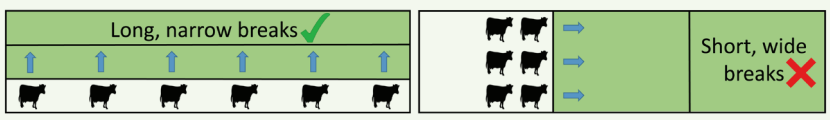
1. **Exclude stock from waterways.** Create an ungrazed buffer zone of crop between the livestock and the waterway. 3-5 metres is a good starting point but this should increase with slope and instability of soil.

2. **Leave an ungrazed buffer zone around either side of Critical Source Areas (CSAs).** These are parts of the paddock that can channel overland flow directly to waterways, like gullies, swales, very wet areas, spring heads, waterway crossings, stock camps and vehicle access routes.

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 as a filter. Or, if there is a waterway present, start grazing at the opposite end of the paddock.



4. **Make breaks "long and narrow"** – research shows that the crop will be utilised more efficiently by cattle.



5. **Back fence.** Regularly backfence stock off 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 CSAs.

7. **Look after your stock.** Provide adequate feed, shelter and clean fresh drinking water. Doing this will also limit stock movement and help reduce damage to crop and soil.

8. **Graze the buffer strips around CSAs when soil is not so wet** and risk of loss has reduced. Graze quickly and lightly if you can.

9. **Plant a catch crop.** Where soil conditions and farm management allow, consider planting a fast growing crop in spring such as greenfeed oats. It can make a dramatic difference to reducing nitrogen losses.

10. **Plan early.** When choosing paddocks for next year's winter feed crop, think about how you can improve your management of CSAs and waterways.

The Pastoral 21 research programme demonstrated that you can reduce losses of sediment and phosphorus (P) from winter crops by up to 80-90% through strategic grazing and careful management of Critical Source Areas (CSAs).

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READ
B+LNZ Factsheets on good management practice for winter grazing. Email **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**

DISCUSS
For more info, contact your Regional Council's land management advisor.