

Winter crop paddock selection

Winter crops

Sow

Many physical, animal and staff welfare factors need to be considered when picking paddocks for winter brassicas. A specific wintering plan is now required for all winter crops, including an animal wellness plan.

The lay of the land

Land contour is crucial. If the slope of the proposed brassica paddock is 10% or more, resource consent may be required.

Critical sources areas (CSA) must also be evaluated. Where are potential overland water paths, low points, and other CSAs in the proposed paddock? Can these be mitigated by planting other species, or restricting stock access?

Waterways

If crop is sown close to a waterway, consent may be required. Check current rules. Best practice is to create buffer areas to reduce potential sediment and nutrient runoff during grazing.

Sowing direction

Can the crop be drilled easily across slopes or parallel to CSAs or waterways to reduce run-off risk during grazing?

Soil type

Ideally crop paddocks will comprise soils less at risk of pugging damage in winter. This reduces risk of excess mud during grazing, and allows faster re-sowing after grazing, e.g. catch-crops.

Shelter, water & space

Animals on crop may suffer stress in cold, wet, windy conditions. Access to good shelter is a must. Stock

must also always have access to adequate supplies of clean fresh water, and have dry space for lying time (8 hours daily).

Plan for the worst

Always have an adverse weather grazing plan. This could mean using a winter crop paddock that is set up for such conditions, or ear-marking other areas of the farm to move animals onto during adverse weather.

For more specific regional information, go to DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb NZ, or your local Regional Council website. See also the section on winter grazing considerations, Transitioning animals onto fodder beet.



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