Paddock selection

Winter crops

Sow

Industry regulations and guidelines mean many physical features need to be considered in selecting paddocks for grazing fodder beet. A specific wintering plan is now required for all winter crops, including an animal wellness plan.

The lay of the land

Land contour is a key factor. If the slope of the proposed fodder beet paddock is 10% or more, a 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, restricting stock access and/or not cultivating?

Waterways

If crop is sown close to a waterway, a consent may be required. Check current rules. Maintaining an ungrazed buffer zone of at least 5 m is recommended near waterways, with larger buffers providing more protection on sloping land. Check regional and national requirements for waterway protection in your area.

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 winter pugging. This reduces excess mud during grazing, and allows faster re-sowing after grazing, e.g. catch crops.

Shelter, water & space

Animals on crop become susceptible to cold stress in cold, wet, windy conditions. Access to good shelter is a must. Stock must always have access to adequate supplies of clean fresh water, and have dry space for lying time (8 hours daily). Portable water troughs can help minimise paddock damage.

Adverse weather events

Ensure there is 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 stock onto during adverse weather.

For more specific regional information, go to DairyNZ, Beef and Lamb, or your local Regional Council website. See also the section on winter feed considerations.

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