

Fodder beet paddock selection

Winter crops

Sow

Paddock selection is important for both the crop, and the animals eating it. Fodder beet is high yielding, but only in the right growing conditions. It is also densely stocked, at times in wet weather. Take both these factors into account before sowing.

Wintering & wellness plan

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

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 may suffer cold stress in cold, wet, windy conditions. Access to good shelter is a must. Make sure animals always have access to adequate supplies of clean fresh water, and dry space for lying time (8 hours daily). Portable water troughs can help reduce paddock damage.

Adverse weather events

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 winter grazing considerations.

