



Intensive winter grazing restrictions must stay, say environmental organisations

The Federated Farmers' recent backlash to new freshwater regulations is unhelpful to the sector and to society, say New Zealand's environmental organisations.

In a joint statement Forest and Bird, Fish and Game, Greenpeace, EDS and Choose Clean Water are calling out Federated Farmers for advocating continuing pollution from intensive winter grazing practices.

Federated Farmers branch president Geoffrey Young recently called for farmers to boycott new restrictions on intensive winter grazing that seek to limit sediment and pathogen run-off entering waterways.

"These rules around intensive winter grazing are long overdue and, don't go far enough to stop the damage done by this practice" says Marnie Prickett from Choose Clean Water.

"The environmental damage caused by intensive winter grazing is not only damaging our rivers and streams, but also the reputations of both farming and New Zealand," she says.

Winter grazing churns paddocks to deep mud because intensive numbers of stock are confined to a small feeding area for long periods. This mud washes into drains, streams and rivers, carrying with it pathogens that can make people sick, choking the environment and smothering insect and plant life.

There are also serious animal welfare concerns associated with the practice. Graphic footage of cows being forced to give birth in the freezing mud has recently been publicised.

The environmental organisations say the new freshwater regulations are essential to restore the health of New Zealand's iconic lakes and rivers, and to protect human health. They are calling on Ministers Parker and O'Connor to resist calls to weaken the regulations.

"These freshwater regulations have been put in place for the wellbeing of all Kiwis, as well as freshwater life," says Gary Taylor from EDS.

"We've long seen the health effects of water pollution caused by dirty agriculture, with whole towns getting sick from polluted water supplies. Now more than ever, we should be protecting the things that keep us healthy—like clean water" he concluded.

Polling by Colmar Brunton shows that Kiwis are rightly concerned about water pollution. 76% of those surveyed were extremely or very concerned about pollution of lakes and rivers.

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