

Tukituki Catchment

Practice Note Low intensity

Background

The Tukituki Catchment Plan (PC6) was made operative in 2015. It includes new ways to manage production land use activities.

Rule TT12 sets standards that should be achieved by 2020 if an activity is to operate as a permitted activity. If these are not met then a resource consent will be required. In particular:

- If a sub-catchment is determined to be exceeding the Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) limit of 0.8 mg/L, then all properties within the sub-catchment greater than 4ha (excluding low intensity farming systems) must obtain resource consent.

The Tukituki Catchment Plan provides for farms meeting the low intensity definition in two ways. Low intensity properties less than 10 ha are exempt from a FEMP and low intensity properties over 10 ha (FEMP required) in a DIN exceeding sub catchment are exempt from obtaining resource consent.

The glossary of PC6 defines low intensity farming as:
Farm properties or farming enterprises that contain no more than 8 stock units per hectare including permanent horticultural and viticultural crops (such as orchards, vineyards) and lifestyle properties; but does not include

- a) Properties used for the production of rotational vegetable crops;
- b) Dairy farms;
- c) Grazed forage crops. Rotational Vegetable Cropping

This relates to vegetable crops grown at paddock scale, domestic vegetable gardens are excluded. Rotational vegetable cropping is an intensive activity to undertake at paddock scale.

Dairy farms

A hand milked cow for personal needs is excluded. If multiple cows are milked, and if the milk is sold, it would be considered a dairy farm.

Grazed forage crops

Forage crops are things such as (but not limited to) maize, oats kale, chicory, plantain and fodder beet.

If you grow one of these crops and it is cut and carried off your property (ie. made into silage that is taken off property) then you could still meet the definition of a “low intensity farming system”. It is the grazing of such crops in situ that is critical in this instance.

The Tukituki Catchment Proposal Board of Enquiry decision commented that the definition meant it would mostly be ‘hard

hill country’ that would qualify, and that there would be only a small number of these that would meet the criteria. In practice it has been found smaller lifestyle block holdings may meet this criteria.

Implementation

As we move into the consenting phase of Tukituki implementation, low intensity status is being examined. The intention of the low intensity exclusion is to omit genuine low intensity operations from a consent burden, when they are having very little impact. The glossary definition above excludes dairy farms and grazed forage crops for this reason. If a property does these things it is not low intensity in essence.

With a stock unit, the glossary definition at face value is ‘no more than eight’, the word average is not mentioned. Consensus internally has been ‘no more than eight at any time’. A farm system is fluid and constantly changing, some pragmatism must be applied.

Calculation of Stock Units

The Beef and Lamb benchmarking tool definitions should be used to determine stock units for each class of stock www.beeflambnz.com/data-tools/benchmarking-tool

As part of the low intensity checklist and form, the calculator based off the Beef and Lamb figures shall be used to determine the properties stock units per hectare.

A common accepted way to record stock tallies to determine stock units is use the number of animals carried over winter.

Reporting Requirements

Under Rule TT1, the Council can request records or nutrient budgets to prove or check low intensity. Farmers/growers therefore should keep records but are not required to create and maintain a nutrient budget in Overseer FM unless the Council requests proof of low intensity.

Stock Exclusion

Low intensity properties may still need consent if they have stock (besides sheep) that are not excluded from waterways or don’t have necessary stock crossings. The property would require a FEMP as a start if over 10 ha, and if schedule 22 in the Tukituki Plan is not met by the FEMP they may require consent for stock exclusion.