

Dairy effluent management in Otago

Managing your farm's effluent system will help you get the maximum production benefit from effluent nutrients while avoiding negative environmental impacts and non-compliance with Otago Regional Council (ORC) Water Plan rules.

Rules for land application of dairy effluent

Under the Water and Air Plans, land application of dairy effluent is a **permitted activity** provided:

- > the application is more than 50 metres from any waterbody, bore or the coast.
- > effluent does not directly enter any drain, water race or groundwater.
- > effluent does not pond, or runoff to any other person's property.
- > new ponds must be at least 150 metres from the property boundary.
- > you apply less than 150kgN/ha/yr, unless in a groundwater protection zone where other rules apply.
- > application does not occur on saturated soils.
- > odours are not noxious, dangerous, offensive or objectionable beyond your farm boundary.
- > outdoor stockpiles of material like waste animal bedding and manure are more than 150m from your farm boundary.
- > land application does not occur within:
 - > 150m of any residential dwelling on a neighbouring property or from any building used for employment purposes on a neighbouring property, and
 - > 20m from a formed road, and
 - > 150m from any public amenity area.

If you can't meet all these permitted activity conditions, you must apply for a resource consent to discharge your farm effluent to land.

If, on inspection, ORC finds that one or more of these permitted activities is not being met then the discharge will be considered non-compliant. A non-compliant grading can lead to a range of actions from a warning letter, infringement notice or prosecution through the Environment Court which may result in a criminal conviction and fine.



Ensure you have a sealed pond with sufficient storage to cover wet periods

Making sure your effluent management is compliant

Make sure you have a robust system which includes:

- > enough available storage to cover wet periods which will be up to three months.
- > rain and stormwater diversion from the effluent storage to minimise the volume of effluent.
- > a warning system for travelling irrigator failure.
- > On undulating land appropriate low rate application equipment may be the best.
- > using waste water minimisation methods, such as scrapers.

Manage and maintain your effluent system well by:

- > regularly servicing and checking equipment and recording actions.
- > training staff in the operation and maintenance of equipment, and recording this action.
- > delaying effluent application when soils are wet, refer to ORC's soil moisture website to determine suitable irrigation times: <http://land.orc.govt.nz/landinfo/>
- > identifying and documenting high risk and low risk paddocks, and only applying effluent to low risk paddocks.
- > setting up a checking system for irrigator operation that records each time it is turned on.
- > offering incentives for successful management.

When things go wrong

1. Immediately fix the problem which may include using bales of hay to block and prevent effluent from reaching waterways. Make changes to ensure it cannot happen again.
2. Phone ORC land resources for advice if you're unsure what to do. The important thing for the ORC is that accidents are identified and rectified not hidden.
3. If you're unsure about what action to take, then either contact an ORC land resource officer, or Victoria Clark, Fonterra sustainable dairying advisor on 027 511 0176 or your DairyNZ consulting officer.

If you receive a non-compliant grading 4 or 5 after a compliance inspection

1. Contact ORC's Senior Compliance Officer if you want to discuss the situation. Each situation is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
2. An infringement notice (council fine) may be issued for minor non-compliance.
3. If the ORC decides non-compliance is to be prosecuted, a letter will be sent to the farmer when the case is passed to the council lawyer. Prosecution in Environment Court may result in a fine and criminal conviction.

For more information on ORC rules and how to remain compliant contact:

Otago Regional Council
Ph 0800 474 082



Ponding caused by effluent irrigation.
This would be non-compliant.

