



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Media Release

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Dairy farm monitoring changes adopted by Council

Changes to the compliance monitoring regime for dairy farms has been adopted by Council today reflecting the ongoing good practice of this sector.

There are currently 360 dairy farms on the West Coast which are visited annually if they hold a consent for discharge and treatment through a pond system, or every second year if they operate under the permitted activity rules and irrigate to land.

West Coast Regional Council Chair, Peter Haddock, said the change in practice made good sense.

“We have seen an ongoing good compliance record for the majority of farms on the West Coast through our regular monitoring programme of the dairy sector. This hard work of farmers should be recognised, and it saves them some money too at a time when things are tight.”

Monitoring records shows that less than 20 farms are recording a non-compliance annually, and most of these are minor non-compliances.

“However, the change in approach does not mean that there will be no checks and balances in place for dairy farmers,” said Chair Haddock.

Central government is requiring all farms of 20ha or more in arable or pastoral use, 5ha or more in horticultural use and 20ha or more of combined use to have a farm plan. This new requirement will enable farmers to maintain their own environmental standards and be held accountable through the certifying and auditing of their farm plan. There are also requirements on farms through monitoring undertaken by the contracted dairy company, which for most farmers on the West Coast is Westland Milk Products.

In addition to this, a dairy farm must have had no non-compliances in the previous 5 years. Should a dairy farm have a proven non-compliance once this change has taken place, Council compliance visits will be conducted every 6 months, or less, until the non-compliance is rectified and then annual visits undertaken until 5 years of non-compliance is once again achieved.

There will still be a compliance component associated with farm plans, but Council farm visits will move to a 3 yearly cycle to coincide with the farm plan audit.

Government commenced the staggered rollout of the Freshwater Farm Plans in August 2023. For the West Coast, the first Farm Plans will be rolled out in the Hokitika Freshwater Management Unit

(FMU) area from February 2024, the Grey FMU in December 2024 and the Kawatiri and South Westland FMU's from February 2025.

Council's implementation of the new regime will be staggered to reflect the Farm Plan rollout.

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