



ENVIRONMENTAL COLLECTIVE NEWSLETTER



TEAM UPDATE

Esther Gorton joined our team late last month as Environmental Advisor. Esther comes off a sheep, beef and cropping farm in Cust and has recently completed her Bachelor of Environmental Management majoring in water management. Esther also worked with Barenberg as a seed assessor,ASUREQuality as a crop inspector and LIC as an AB technician and assistant. She has a strong passion for water and catchment management and is excited to be getting out in the field and working along farmers at AIC and managing the subcatchment groups.

Please contact Esther if you have queries regarding our FEP auditing programme at esther@amuriirrigation.co.nz or 027 415 1923.

OVERSEER UPDATE

You may have seen some recent articles regarding a government review of Overseer raising concerns about the accuracy of Overseer as a regulatory tool. We have been talking to ECan and await some further directive on how they intend to utilise Overseer into their decision making frameworks. AIC does not rely on Overseer for our consent compliance reporting, but it is used in the FEP programme when the auditor is looking to see if the Overseer model is reasonable and reflective of the farm system rather than the absolute loss number. At this stage it is not envisaged the audit programme will be compromised. We will update you as information comes to hand.

20/21 FEP AUDIT RESULTS

67 audits were undertaken this season: 63% were As, 34% Bs and 3% Cs. This is an outstanding result especially for the 7 farms audited for the first time, of which 6 achieved an A grade audit. These results are worth celebrating and show the power of the FEP programme, timebound actions and continual improvement and how self-ownership drives positive change. Well done to the farms involved in the 20/21 audit campaign.

However, there is still room for improvement and while we made some pleasing progress in irrigation management, it is still underperforming in relation to the other areas audited and so

irrigation will continue to be a focus this season. If you have any feedback on how we can better support you or enhance this area of the programme, please get in touch.

AUDITING REMINDERS AND WINTER FEEDBACK

Reviewing your audit report and understanding the actions and recommendations it contains is an important aspect of the FEP programme. Auditors work to detailed requirements outlining how they can assign grades which build into the overall audit score. Your grade is based on the level of confidence the auditor can assign to you based on evidence provided and on-farm confirmation at the audit. If you can provide evidence and articulate sound answers for the auditor but the on-farm evidence does not support this, you may be letting yourself down.

Actions arising from audits need to be completed before the next audit so don't leave it until the last minute. If you can or at least make steady progress towards completing an action, why not do it now? If we want to showcase our catchment and be proud of what we are achieving, then implement the actions now. Let's be leaders.

Winter audits have generally gone well, and preliminary results do not indicate that the wet winter has contributed to a marked change in grades. Nearly all farms require a WMP, and paddock selection and preparation appear to have been well thought through. Paddock selection remains critical for successful winter grazing and feedback from auditors suggests that use of portable troughs, back fencing (where possible), feeding direction and leaving sufficient buffer margins are areas we can improve. We intend to refine how Winter Management Plans are implemented on-farm to support great on-farm outcomes.

Dave's drone footage has been useful in winter audits, and you may find aerial imagery of your farm helpful to understand the flow pathways and it may give you a different perspective of what is happening on the ground. If we can assist in any pre-planning winter considerations, please get in touch.

CHANGES TO ISMP AUGUST 2021

ECan recently approved an update to our Irrigation Scheme Management Plan (ISMP) which guides the FEP programme. This can be viewed at <https://www.amuriirrigation.co.nz/sustainability/>

The changes are:

1. The inclusion of winter auditing as part of the annual auditing cycle and targets and GMPs associated with Winter Management practices.
2. There will be a 6-week notification period of your farm's selection for audit.
3. You will receive at least 3 weeks' notice of your scheduled audit date, time, and auditor.
4. Your audit appointment can be changed up to 5 working days before the scheduled date. Changes outside of this timeframe will result in an automatic 'C' audit grade, unless due to specific circumstances such as illness, sickness, death, and force majeure events.
5. Remote data imagery and technologies may be used in audits, this includes drone footage, aerial imagery, and photos. Face to face audits will continue (where possible) and technology will be used to provide perspective and efficiency. You will be informed when technology is used.
6. Failure to provide a nutrient budget at the time of auditing which accurately represents the farm system will result in an immediate 'C' grade.
7. Confirmation of who should attend audits. It is strongly encouraged that the landowner, farm manager, on-farm team or lessee are present at the audit and for winter audits this may include the stock owner for grazing animals.
8. Inclusion of process around regulatory non-compliance matters or areas of concern with conduct, performance or compliant.
9. If Environment Canterbury takes any significant non-compliance or enforcement action in relation to your property. Then you must notify AIC within 5 working days of being made aware of the issue and a re-audit of the FEP will occur at the next audit cycle, regardless of audit grade and timeframes. The cost of this audit will be borne by the EC member.
10. Any observed on-farm performance issues reported directly to AIC by third parties will be treated in confidence and reviewed through an on-farm advisory visit. This may include AIC employees, Environmental subcommittee members and/or technical advisors.
11. Any concerns with the outcomes of the audit process, auditor conduct, grading on your farm or that of neighbouring farms needs to be raised in a timely manner with AIC and will be treated in confidence by following the on-farm advisory process.
12. A preaudit advisory visit is proposed to all A grade farms. This may include a 1:1 visit or phone discussion to ensure they are well equipped to maintain their audit grade. This is not mandatory.
13. A 'Code of Conduct' has been included for the audit programme for all parties (Farm Management and on-farm team, FEP owner, FEP auditor and AIC employees).

WATER SERVICES BILL

In March, the Government invited submissions on the Water Services Bill (Three Waters Bill) which intends to create a new regulatory regime to manage NZ's stormwater, wastewater and drinking water under the management of a new government agency, Taumata Arowai.

The regulatory requirements on supplies to more than one dwelling will be significant and we encourage you to stay up to date with these.

We would like to understand:

1. how many private bores are being utilised for drinking water supply?
2. the number of dwellings or farm buildings serviced from this bore?
3. any data held about the bore and water quality (if any)?

This information allows us to better develop catchment-based monitoring and water quality improvement and protection (if needed). We do not believe we have details of all bores being used. If you or your employee accommodation are supplied by domestic bores, please register this with Esther Gorton on esther@amuriirrigation.co.nz or 027 415 1923. We will then test this bore and ensure it is suitable for drinking water purposes.

190KG NITROGEN CAP

From 1st July, nitrogen fertiliser on pastoral land is restricted to less than 190kg per hectare unless obtained from natural sources (e.g., animal effluent). Beyond this requires a resource consent. It is important to review nitrogen use on-farm throughout the season to ensure your system doesn't exceed the cap. It might be useful to have a midseason stocktake of use, say in December. This will assist you to:

- Reduce application rates and leave sufficient capacity for autumn use
- Drop out areas during the height of summer when responses might be limited
- Plan and manage feed requirements and/or dry off or cull stock ahead of time.
- Focus on higher performing paddocks as these are your greatest risk of exceeding the cap. If proactively monitored, they may get another graze.
- Work with your advisers and on-farm partners to make timely decisions. There are no excuses for exceeding the nitrogen limit.

By 31 July 2022, all dairy farms need to report their nitrogen use. We have no further clarity as to how this will be done or what information is required beyond what was released in the NES-FW in August 2020. We will update you as information comes to hand.

ENVIRONMENTAL COLLECTIVE CONTACTS:

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