

Ground Rules

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Welcome to the second edition of Ground Rules, FAR's environmental newsletter for Canterbury farmers. This edition for farmers in the Selwyn Te Waihora zone provides updates on some important changes that will make the Environment Canterbury consenting process quicker and less expensive.

Use the following links to websites and information pages to find out more information.

A new website provides a “one-stop-shop” for Canterbury farmers

Farming for Generations is the new Environment Canterbury website for farmers which has all the information and updates for the Canterbury rules in one place. We recommend you check it out on www.canterburywater.farm

The information on the site is zone specific so you can easily find what is relevant to your farm by opening the “zones” section. If you haven't yet worked out what your consenting requirements are, this is a good place to start.

NCheck - An alternative to OVERSEER® Approved for Selwyn Te Waihora

Free and easy and quick to use

We promised it last year but our timing was a little off. Our proposal for NCheck, the alternative to OVERSEER, went to Environment Canterbury's CEO just as a newly elected regional council was being formed. Things were bound to take time and they did and then, our victory was only partial.

As a start NCheck has been approved only for use in Selwyn Te Waihora. Good for this zone but disappointing for others, as NCheck can make the consenting process quicker and less expensive.

Also at the moment, NCheck is an interim measure. It will be available for use for five years while the crop module in OVERSEER is being updated to improve its applicability to arable systems.

You can find NCheck on the **Farming for Generations website** under the “Industry Agreed Good Management Practices (GMP)” section, <https://gmploss estimator.ecan.govt.nz/>

Who can use NCheck and what can be used for?

NCheck can be used by all farmers in Selwyn Te Waihora to determine their farm nitrogen loss number and based on this, whether or not a land use consent is required.

More importantly arable and horticultural farmers can use NCheck nitrogen loss numbers in their consents and during on-farm audits of the farm environment plan. This provides an alternative to the requirement for OVERSEER budgets.

It is important to note that consents issued with NCheck N Loss numbers will expire in 2022. After this time you will need to renew your consent using OVERSEER data.

If you choose to use NCheck it is very important to keep a set of your farm records from 2009-2013 as you will eventually need this to develop an OVERSEER nitrogen baseline.

How does NCheck work and how accurate is it?

NCheck is an electronic tool. Find it on the Farming for Generations website.

Once you log in and enter your farm address, NCheck leads you through a simple set of questions about your farm system and its management. It uses the answers to estimate a Nitrogen Loss Estimate for the farm and assumes the farm is being managed with good management practices (GMPs). More information about GMPs can be found here: <http://www.canterburywater.farm/gmp/>

Instructions on how to use NCheck are on the FAR and Farming for Generations websites.

<https://www.far.org.nz/research/environment/overview>

OVERSEER and NCheck both use farm information to estimate the farm's N-Baseline and/or N-Loss numbers. The difference between them is that OVERSEER requires detailed farm information relating to the management of the rotations and the stock on the farm, whereas NCheck uses a set of questions about the key practices on the farm and assumes that the farm is being managed with good management practices. Both models use the farm's soil and climate information.

The NCheck numbers were developed as part of Environment Canterbury's Matrix of Good Management project (MGM). As part of this project, many OVERSEER runs were done for a set of representative Canterbury farm systems, including arable and vegetable systems. These numbers sit in a large matrix or "look-up" table. NCheck, via the answers you give, leads you to the OVERSEER number in this table which is the closest representation for your farm.

The OVERSEER nutrient loss estimates are more representative of the actual farm because they draw on detailed information about the farm. However, if your rotation is similar to one of the 10 rotations in the NCheck list and your management practices match the industry defined good management practices, the two models will produce similar numbers.

If you are unsure or uneasy about the accuracy of NCheck you can choose to get your N Loss numbers prepared with OVERSEER.

Who should use OVERSEER instead of NCheck?

You may still choose to use OVERSEER data for the current consenting process. If this is the case you will need a current OVERSEER budget and your nitrogen baseline number (which is the average annual loss of nitrogen from your farm during the period 1 July 2009–30 June 2013 calculated using the latest version of OVERSEER).

If you are part of an irrigation scheme, you may still need to use OVERSEER. Check with your scheme.

If a significant large part of your farm business relies on intensive, winter dairy grazing you should prepare an OVERSEER budget.

If you wish to explore different nitrogen mitigations or land use scenarios OVERSEER will be the better option.

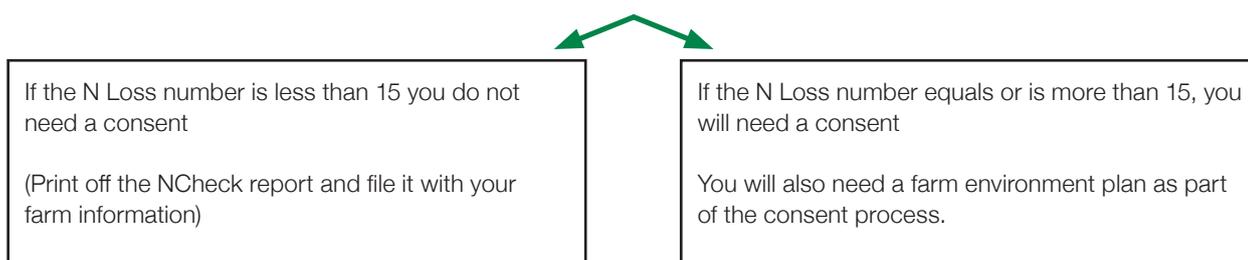
If you are planning on selling your property, you will need an OVERSEER nitrogen baseline number.

The Consenting Process in Selwyn Te Waihora

The first step in the process is to determine whether you require a consent <http://www.canterburywater.farm/zones>. You may not.

If you are in the Cultural and phosphorus and sediment zones, a consent is required, whatever your N loss number.

If you are not in these zones, you can use NCheck to find your N Loss number



Your consent will be required, by July 2017

Help is at Hand

Environment Canterbury is the place to start. If the Farming for Generations website is not giving you the information you want ring their customer services line: 0800 324 636

FAR and Environment Canterbury will be running consent writing workshops after Easter.

FAR will run additional farm environment plan (FEP) workshops if there is sufficient interest. Please register your interest for FEP workshops with the FAR office so we can get an idea of the demand. Phone 03 345 5783 or email admin@far.org.nz

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