

Winter Grazing Action Group

Tuesday 21 April 2020

MINUTES

Date:	Tuesday 21 April 2020	
Time:	1:00pm – 4:00pm. <i>The group took a brief pause at 1.45pm and 3.05pm, as is good practice for virtual meetings.</i>	
Location:	Skype	
Attendees		
Winter Grazing Action Group		
Lindsay Burton	Independent Chair	
Ash Keown	NZ Veterinary Association	
Caroline Murray	Dairy Companies Association NZ	
Helen Thoday	DairyNZ	
Julie Geange	Federated Farmers	
Milton Munro	PGG Wrightson	
Miranda Hunter	Farm consultant	
Peter Young	Farm consultant	
Tim Driscoll	Dairy farmer	
Tony Pearse	Deer Industry NZ	
Will Halliday	Beef + Lamb NZ	
Leonie Ward	Manager, Animal Welfare Sector Liaison	
Penny Timmer-Arends	Animal Welfare Sector Liaison	
Gray Harrison	Manager Animal Welfare & NAIT Compliance	
Ministry for Primary Industries staff		
Tinta Tan	Senior Service Designer	
Jordache Mackenzie	Graduate, Service Design	
Ruby Macandrews (2:30 – 3:30pm)	Adviser, Communications	
Apologies		
Pania King	Sheep & beef farmer; Taskforce member	

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed the members, and noted an apology from Pania King.

An additional agenda item was added to discuss two research proposals under consideration by the MPI Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures investment programme.

2. Minutes from 24 February 2020

The minutes were agreed as a true & accurate record of the meeting held 24 February 2020. These will be placed on the MPI website for transparency.

3. Terms of Reference

Amendments to the draft terms of reference were discussed. The Group agreed to amend the first principle to reflect that discussions are encouraged to be shared outside of the meetings, provided comments aren't attributed to individuals.

MPI will amend the Terms of Reference & circulate to members for sign off.

4. Update on MPI activities

Most of the recommendations in the Winter Grazing Taskforce report require a shared "pan industry-government" response, however there are two recommendations that are solely the responsibility for MPI to progress.

Penny provided an update on the planned training for MPI Animal Welfare Inspectors. Originally a two day workshop in Canterbury was scheduled for early April, however this was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. Instead, a Skype session to go through the assessment tool will be held with Inspectors over the next few weeks. (Taskforce Recommendation #7)

The Taskforce also recommended that the codes of welfare be reviewed, and potential regulations identified. The Farm to Processor Animal Welfare Forum, (FPAWF) has completed some work on this, and provided information to the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC). NAWAC has established its timeline for its review of the codes of welfare. The pastoral codes (dairy, sheep & beef, deer) are included in those that are to be reviewed in the next 1-3 years. (Taskforce Recommendation #7)

5. Update on industry activities

Several members had provided written updates in advance which were taken as read.

Helen gave an update on the joint DairyNZ & Beef+Lamb Smart Wintering webinar, which was held for Southland/Otago farmers on 17 April. Over 250 farmers joined the webinar, as well as rural professionals. The WGAG members who had attended gave positive feedback about the information conveyed, the pace & the tone. Another webinar is planned for Canterbury/North Otago farmers on 24 April. DairyNZ has updated its [Break Fed Wintering](#) resource which has been sent out to 1600 farms in the lower South.

The Group discussed how graziers who aren't associated with the two levy bodies can be reached. There were several suggestions and an action to continue the conversation offline.

Milton advised that PGG Wrightson is revising their winter grazing contract between the grazer and the stock owner to include animal welfare expectations. Milton will share it with members in confidence when it has been finalised.

A wintering policy document was also discussed. DairyNZ has the basis of a policy, which could include a winter grazing contract template so both parties are aware of their obligations before & during winter.

Tony provided an overview of the work Deer Industry NZ completed prior to the Covid-19 lockdown. This included several farmer workshops to discuss 'what great wintering looks like for deer'. DINZ staff also visited deer farms in the Aparima catchment in Southland to see what plans farmers had in place for winter. They continue phoning deer farmers to ask the same questions.

Peter and Tim provided an overview of the winter grazing situation in the lower half of the South Island. Due to a poor spring, and flooding event in February crop yield is down. Farmers are having trouble getting culls off farm to reduce feed demand, and winter grazing contracts are very expensive & in some cases have been cancelled. Despite this, there are some positive signs. Farmers seem more aware of wintering practices than last year, and some are planning to trial the use of straw to provide a lying surface & other innovations.

Feed shortages in the North Island and extended drought conditions were also discussed and the resulting limited options for feed redistribution.

6. System mapping update

The original plan was to develop the maps, and use these to inform the work plan. By having the different farming systems graphed will allow the group to identify;

- where resource is already applied
- key decision points & drivers for these
- where parties can positively influence decisions

Once completed the next step would be to conduct interviews or workshops, to ask farmers, rural professionals, and other parties involved in wintering what barriers to change they see, and how these might be addressed.

The mapping work has been affected by Covid19 as the people involved in this work have been diverted to the Covid19 response. Also with the restrictions on travel and meetings within the Covid response face to face meetings are not possible, technology has its limitations, which makes this type of work challenging.

The dairy maps are largely complete, the deer map is in progress, and the sheep & beef map is yet to be started. Work will resume out-of-session to continue developing the maps.

Due to the timing of the Group's establishment (after winter crops had already been sown for the season) and the tight feed supply this winter, the ability to influence change this season is limited. There are resources available for farmers already, e.g. the Feed Support line, if they need help developing a feed plan through to spring.

Good Management Practice (GMP) for the environmental aspects of wintering is well described, but animal welfare requirements are not. The picture of what 'good wintering for animal welfare' looks like is less clear for farmers.

The Chair suggested this discussion be continued at the next meeting, with a strawperson to be drafted, outlining what is unacceptable as well as what is good, for the group to work from.

7. Communications plan

Ruby spoke about the draft communications plan. It was drafted prior to the Covid-19 lockdown so requires some updates in the current environment. Some of the points highlighted by Ruby are:

- Share success stories to acknowledge the good work farmers have already done
- Ensure consistent messaging from central & local government, and industry groups

There was some discussion around whether a soft approach should be taken this winter.

Despite the current challenges from COVID-19, the Winter Grazing Action Group agreed it is committed to continuing its work to help ensure that animal welfare is a key part of all winter grazing decisions in the pastoral supply chain.

Ensuring the welfare of all animals on-farm over winter remains a priority. It was acknowledged farmers are dealing with a number of challenges at present, and there are tools and resources available if needed.

Helen, Caroline & Ruby were tasked to refine the communications plan out of session.

8. Winter grazing research proposals

The Chair has received two research proposals which the Group will be asked to consider and determine whether they align with the recommendations of the Taskforce. They are currently being assessed by the Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures investment programme at MPI and the group's opinion will be considered as part of the assessment criteria.

Lindsay will circulate the proposals to the group for discussion at the following meeting.

Action	Responsible	Timeframe / status
Upload the minutes from 24 February 2020 to the website	MPI	ASAP
Edit & circulate the Terms of Reference for approval out-of-session	MPI	ASAP
Out of session Skype meeting to discuss the assessment tool MPI are piloting this winter	MPI Julie Ash Miranda	Within next fortnight
MPI to provide additional information about the assessment tool at the following meeting	MPI	On agenda for 5 May meeting
Circulate the recoding of the 17 April Smart Wintering Webinar, and the invitation for the upcoming webinar on 24 April	Helen	Complete
Discuss options for communicating with graziers around good wintering	Helen Will Julie	Report back at 5 May meeting
Share PGG winter grazing contract when finalised	Milton	When available
Helen to circulate winter grazing policy document	Helen	By 5 May
Tony to find out is a summary of the Aparima Catchment visits is available	Tony	Report back at 5 May meeting
Include agenda item for the next meeting about clear targets for animal welfare in winter grazing systems 'what does good look like'.	MPI	On agenda for 5 May meeting
Draft a strawperson as a basis of the discussion	Ash	
Review the draft Communications plan	Ruby Caroline Helen Penny	In progress
Circulate the two confidential research proposals to the WGAG	Lindsay	On agenda for 5 May meeting