AMURI IRRIGATION COMPANY

FACTSHEET:
CRITICAL SOURCE AREAS

On 01 November 2022, the Intensive Winter Grazing rules for forage crops grazed during winter come into effect, including the implementation of Critical Source Areas (CSAs). Landowners are required to carry out all practical steps to minimise pugging and nutrient losses from CSAs.

Critical Source Areas

A CSA is defined as an area with greater potential to move nutrients and sediment into freshwater pathways causing negative impact on waterways and farm productivity.

Stock must not be grazed in CSAs during the winter period (01 May-30 September). A 5m buffer strip (that does not include any forage crop) must be maintained between grazed areas and any water body or drainage ditch.

Managing Critical Source Areas and Waterways

- Identify all CSAs and waterways (include rivers, lakes, wetlands, and ephemeral water bodies which only flow at certain times of the year) in your selected forage crop paddocks.
- Ensure you have enough paddock area to maintain at least a 5m buffer strip between grazed areas and all waterways. In high risk cases, a wider buffer may be warranted.
- The buffer strips and CSAs cannot be cultivated into forage crops. Buffer strips act as filters slowing overland flow. To provide effective filtering, the buffer zone/s must be left uncultivated (unless they are part of your re-grassing strategy).
- Ensure no stock (sheep, deer, beef and dairy) have access to CSAs and the 5m buffer to waterways is maintained during the winter period when stock are grazing. CSAs can be grazed outside the winter period.
- Talk to your contractors prior to paddock cultivation so that known risk areas are managed appropriately. Ideally mark these areas out in the paddock so they are easily identifiable for the contractor, using a temporary fence or visible boundary.
- Include CSA management in your Winter Management Plan or prepare an Adverse Events Plan, and ensure your team understands it.
- Collect evidence of what does or doesn't work well for future planning.

A Critical Source Area left in grass

Why are Critical Source Areas an Issue?

CSA are often low-lying areas of farms such as gullies and swales where runoff accumulates in high concentration during large rainfall events.

Runoff carries much of the sediment and phosphorus lost from a farm through dung, fertiliser, and eroded or exposed soil. In heavy rain, CSAs act like a highway carrying sediment and phosphorus to waterways.

The risk of moving nutrients and sediment increases if the CSA is significantly de-vegetated by stock, cultivation or vehicle movements such as feeding out during seasonal wet periods or when heavy weather events occur. Loss of topsoil can also impact future crop production.

By managing CSAs well, sediment and nutrient loss can be reduced and water quality improved. It also helps meet Good Management Practices and the requirements of your Farm Environment Plan.

A Critical Source Area leading to a waterway

We're Here to Help

If you'd like some assistance identifying CSAs or have any questions, feel free to contact Esther. We can add your Farm Map into GIS to assist with identifying potential CSAs.

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