



Maintaining Riparian Zones

Once a riparian zone has been established, it needs regular maintenance in order to stay functional and effective. Creating riparian zones is an investment, so to help you protect them we've put together some tips.

Protect your plants

- Check and maintain your fences on a regular basis, especially after strong winds or floods. Hungry stock can quickly damage a riparian zone!
- Release spray in early (November to December) or late summer (February to March) at least once a year. Don't leave release spraying too late as aggressive grasses can smother and kill plants.

- Keep pest weeds to a reasonable level and keep controlling pest animals. More information is available in the Pest Animals in Riparian Zones factsheet.
- Replace or repair damaged plant protectors and only remove when plants are well-established and secure.
- Prevent or repair any bank erosion to protect fencing and plants.

Be waste-wise

- Ensure effluent disposal piping is laid well away from a waterway in case of any leaks.
- Keep ofal pits and silage stacks at least 50 metres away from waterways.

Definitions

Release Spraying: Weed spraying undertaken after planting. For best results, release spray at least once a year during summer.

Protect your waterways

- Ensure all crossings, road and lanes adjacent to a waterway are bunded and contoured to channel silt and manure onto pasture, not into the waterway.
- Maintain suitable drainage by removing excess silt and nuisance weed growth.
- Remove drainage cleanings and spread over paddocks to prevent the material returning to the waterway, and to utilise nutrients to grow grass or crops.

Look after the wildlife

- Make sure fish can passage through all culverts and underneath bridges.

Commercial farm forestry

- A pruning and thinning programme of trees can maximise potential returns.
- To reduce losses and damage, ensure prunings and thinned trees are removed from the waterway flood channel.

Pest plants and animals

Newly planted riparian zones are at risk from being smothered by weeds and damaged by pest animals. Good weed and grass control close to plants while they are establishing will not only help with their survival, but will promote early growth. Protecting your plants from damage from pest animals such as possums, hares and rabbits is also important. Find out more in our Weeds in Riparian Zones and Pest Animals in Riparian Zones factsheets.

Managed grazing in riparian zones

Riparian buffers can trap soils and absorb nutrients from runoff before they reach waterways, but to retain these qualities they need to be managed. In some situations, grazing a riparian zone can be beneficial.

A dense grass sward of 10-15cm is most effective for trapping contaminants as it slows runoff and allows soils and nutrients to settle. If the grass is left too long, water can form channels and bypass the buffer, and flow directly into a waterway.

To avoid compaction, sheep can lightly graze a buffer zone at the appropriate times. This is best done in 6-monthly intervals, in early spring and again in autumn. If the terrain permits, hay-making in summer is also a possibility.

Riparian Planting Programme

Use this calendar to plan your riparian maintenance programme.

YEAR ONE											
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
					Order plants		Spray - spray 4-6 weeks before planting. - stake out plant locations		Planting		
YEAR TWO											
	Maintenance - and general weed control						Spray - spray 4-6 weeks before planting replacements. - stake out new plant locations		Planting		Maintenance - and general weed control
		Check - for plant survival - order replacements									

Further Assistance

Every farm is different, so having the expert advice of a Land Sustainability Officer is recommended. To arrange a free visit please contact Environment Southland's Land Sustainability team on (03) 2115 115 or 0800 76 88 45.

The booklet *Clean Streams – A guide to managing waterways on Southland farms* is available on Environment Southland's website. You can also request a printed copy by phoning 0800 76 88 45.