

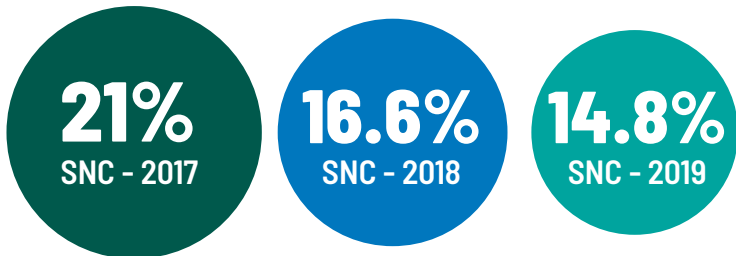


**We know that both the region's drought and Covid 19 have made this a stressful time for many farmers.** Make sure you look after yourself, family, employees, and keep an eye on your neighbours. Talk to trusted advisors and make use of the help and support agencies. The Rural Support Trust (RST) can connect you with professionals including farming or business advice, supplies, financial information, health and counselling services. Rural Support Trust services are continuing through this isolation period and are free and confidential.

**Are you running out of stock drinking water?** Civil Defence may be able to help, contact us on **0800 363 222**

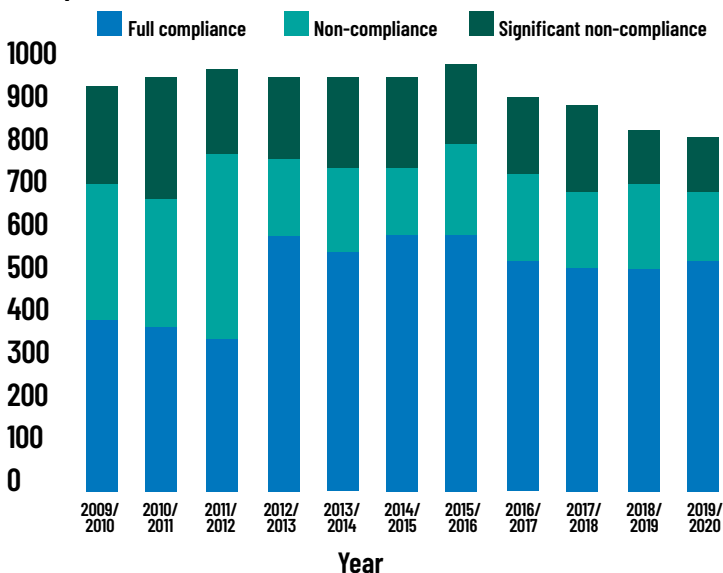
## 2019-20 Compliance rates

All active dairy farms were monitored between July and November 2019. Although we are continuing to see a decrease in the rate of significant non-compliance (SNC), the issues found are again largely reflective of inadequate management.



In 2019 there was an increase in the number of untreated effluent discharges to water. Most significant non-compliances found could have been avoided with routine checks of the system.

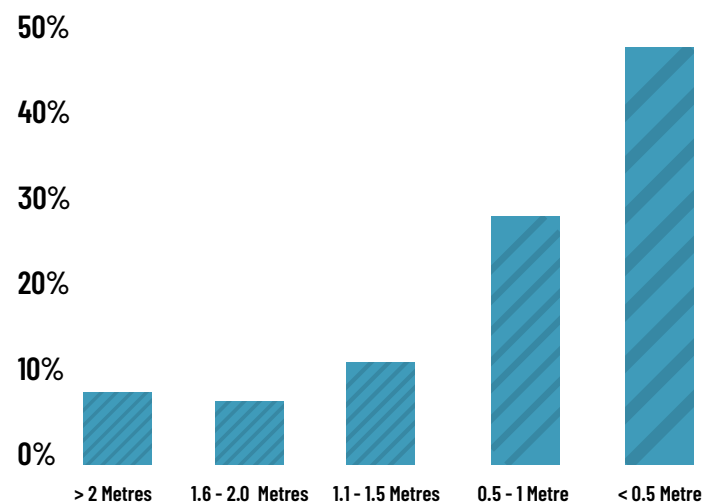
### Compliance rate (all farms)



## Pond level checks

In April 2016, pond levels were checked on 100 farms. This was again carried out in April 2019 with the results shown below. The sample showed 76% of farms had less than 1m of available freeboard and over 45% of ponds checked had less than 0.5m of freeboard available.

### Metres of freeboard



Rule C.6.3.1.7(b) of the Proposed Regional Plan for Northland now requires: at least 75% working volume available between 1 March and 1 May each year.

As farming has been listed as an essential service over this lockdown period, all ponds should be at or near empty by 1 May 2020 to allow for adequate storage of wastewater over winter.

# The importance of empty ponds

Resource consents to discharge treated wastewater are largely subject to a condition that specifies ponds must be at or near empty prior to winter (1 May).

This is also a requirement in the new regional rules. Wastewater ponds should have adequate storage in an average/below average rainfall year, with no need to exercise the consent. Wastewater is then applied to land once ground conditions are suitable.

Ponds must be at or near empty by 1 May each year to ensure adequate storage is available to hold wastewater through the winter months when conditions are not suitable for land application.



## Water use

**Access to water is vital to the running of your business.**

Efficient water use is now more important than ever, with Northland currently experiencing one of the driest periods on record. Water sources have been under considerable pressure and are at very low levels.

New regional rules now require a water use consent, depending on the volumes of water used at the dairy shed.

Do you know how much water you are using? Dairy farms likely to be using 30m<sup>3</sup> or more/day (based on the Dairy NZ average of 70L/cow/day) need to apply for resource consent to authorise the existing take.

The Effluent Volume Reduction Project carried out by Dennis Wright highlighted the way in which a few changes can reduce water use and effluent volumes by more than half, thus improving environmental performance and significantly reducing on-farm operating costs.

***Fitting a meter to measure the volume of water used at the dairy is a good start.***

## Block stormwater pipes when not in use

**Stormwater diversions are important to reduce the volume of fresh water entering your ponds.**

Large rainfall events often occur when the effluent system is under pressure and ground conditions are not suitable for land application. Some monitoring inspections in 2019 found diversion pipes uncapped with a high risk of untreated wastewater discharging to water. It is important that when the diversion is not in use, the pipe/system is blocked to prevent any accidental discharge.

***Top tip: Install a visual reminder to indicate when the stormwater diversion is in use.***





## Biosecurity controls still in place

Standard practice will continue for FDE Officers to 'arrive clean, leave clean'. A hygiene kit is carried in each vehicle to use when water is not available on farm.



## Siphoning

Wastewater was found to be siphoning from irrigators at some farm inspections last season. An anti-siphon valve should be installed, particularly where a gradient is located between the pond(s) and irrigator(s). This will prevent the flow of wastewater once the pump has turned off.

**Another 'safety' option is to install a timer on the pump to reduce the risk of over-application.**



## Clean drains out if accidental discharge

In the event of an accidental discharge of wastewater it is important that:

1. council is notified
2. steps are taken to contain and/or remove as much of the wastewater as possible.

*This is to reduce any impacts or adverse environmental effects.*

## Roof water diversion

**New regional rules now require all roof water to be diverted.**

In the 2013 monitoring season, only 20% of dairy sheds were found to have permanent diversion of roof water away from the yard and ponds.

Monitoring during the last six years has shown a vast improvement, with 88% of all farms now permanently diverting roof water away from the yard and ponds. If you haven't got permanent diversions in place for roof water, now is the time to do it.

**Top tip: routinely check the guttering for any breaks and clear any weeds; make sure the downpipes are connected and diverting away from the yard and ponds.**

## Land application of wastewater

**Deferred irrigation is currently deemed industry best practice.**

Wastewater is a valuable resource that requires careful management. When applied to land in compliance with regional rules, wastewater is utilised in a productive and sustainable way.

Variances throughout the region, including extreme weather events and challenging topography, mean that each system is unique. What works for one farm may not work for another. Various application systems are available and can be designed to suit your farm, from rain guns to slurry wagons to low rate application sprinklers.

## Urgent Action Notices

**Urgent Action Notices are used to alert farmers of any immediate issues to reduce environmental effects – it's not NRC's job to check the system for farm owners.**

Officers are inspecting the system to check compliance with consent conditions and/or regional rules.

When a significant issue is found at a routine monitoring inspection and no one is present on farm, the monitoring officer will leave an Urgent Action Notice in a prominent place at the dairy. This will be followed up with a phone call from a Farm Monitoring Officer.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES	FARMERS ROLE	NRC'S ROLE
Comply with relevant rules/consents	✓	✗
Routinely check the system	✓	✗
Check compliance with relevant rules/consents	✗	✓
Take water quality samples	✗	✓

## Dead stock and bobby calves

Non-compliance with regional rules is often found each year relating to the disposal of dead stock.

**AFFCO will not be picking up or processing any bobby calves for the Autumn calving season.**

Therefore, it is important that all farmers are aware of the regional rules when disposing of dead stock.

**The disposal site must not be within:**

- » 50m of surface water (permanent or intermittently flowing), a bore, or someone else's house.
- » 20 meters of a road/public land.
- » Stormwater from the catchment around the site is diverted away.
- » The site is covered and contained (to deal with both odour and pests).
- » The site should be sufficiently compacted to avoid contamination of ground water.

## Fire ban

With dry conditions likely to continue through April, both fire bans and restrictions are still in place across Northland.

Zone 1, which includes all areas north of Taipa and Herekino Harbour, including the Aupōuri and Karikari peninsulas, remains under a total fire ban. This means you are not allowed to light fires or burn outside.

The Whangārei district and zone 2 of the Far North are under a restricted fire season - you must apply for a permit to light a fire and regional rules apply.

**“ I think farmers are classic at looking after their pasture and their buildings and machinery, but they just work themselves into the ground. Burnout is a real thing, so in order to be sustainable as a business you actually have to look after yourself. ”**  
**Siobhan O'Malley,**  
**Sharemilker of the Year 2017**

**Find out what works for you then lock it in.**



Farmstrong is a rural wellbeing programme sharing farmer-to-farmer tips and advice.

**Find out more at [www.farmstrong.co.nz](http://www.farmstrong.co.nz)**

## Unsure about something related to your farm dairy wastewater system?

Get in touch with our **Farm Monitoring team**, we are here to help.



Rachael Anderson  
Farm Monitoring Manager



Nathan Walker  
Farm Monitoring Officer



Megan Evans  
Farm Monitoring Officer

☎ 0800 002 004

@ info@nrc.govt.nz

🌐 [www.nrc.govt.nz/farmmanagement](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/farmmanagement)

**Northland**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL   
Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau