

THE LONG AND OVERWHELMING TO-DO LIST OF A DAIRY FARMER



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Have you ever been served 100 tennis balls at once and expected to return each one with accuracy? – and when you don't you are penalised!

This is how a client described owning a dairy farm now with the outrageous level of compliance all are expected to achieve.

Being totally confused by bombardment of expectation I sat down and started jotting down the on-farm compliance I am expected to conform with on my own farm. The list is still not complete.

I started with my Dairy Company Supply agreement which in itself is quite complicated and should be read.

The next hurdle I thought I should action is ensuring I have copies of my Resource Consents to take Ground Water. I notice they do have an expiry date which is worth noting in your diary. A complicated document on its own. Being proactive I installed a meter and the readings are regularly sent to WRC. Just as well I do as late one Wednesday afternoon recently, I had a phone call from the Council saying they are conducting a spot audit the next morning. With slightly less sleep than usual the meeting went well, however they had no record of my meter readings. When they did however discover them, I now have an issue of using too much water and have to re-apply – Ouch. Hence a warning letter received shortly after.

My Dairy Effluent Storage Calculator is an interesting beast. I have put my faith with the experts on this one along with the Actual Area Dairy Effluent Calculator. Yes, the sprinklers and irrigators are all calibrated and hopefully not spreading too heavily. No, it's not ending up in the river!

Heck, you should see my "Whole Farm Soil Test Fert Map & Plan". A weighty document I have invested in to ensure no excess Fertiliser usage and my nitrogen application is under 190units/ha. That's taken some precision calculating so not to be penalised.

My Farm report now says my GHG CH₄ (methane emissions) is 8495 and my GHG N₂O (Nitrous Oxide Emissions) is 2098. Umm, the graph also shows 25KG/Ha/Yr Nitrogen Loss and 27% Nitrogen Conversion Efficient. My farm is in the middle of the graph so I must be ok, who knows.

What about my Farm Environmental Plan? That's on the to-do list. I've just found my Sustainable Dairying Water Accord. Again, I'm in the middle of the graph so I must be ok?

QCONZ emailed and we booked in for the annual shed inspection. Mostly good but a few small issues that needed addressing. The incorrect soap at the hand basin was an easy fix however on the

return visit I did have a little too much "manure" on the yard. It may have been because we have been trying to save water. Anyway, we survived that curve-ball!

What's next, well the milking machine test. Another hold your breath invoice turning up!, but we managed that one as well.

All this methane gas has caused global warming and now my milk is too warm. Our farm was outside its "Milk Collection Temperature Specifications". It sounded like an expensive fix (and it was). Concrete pads, ice banks, wiring, plumbing, the works but hey – I've got cold milk now.

Another invoice, My Overseer annual subscription expired. I suppose I have to pay it to keep compliant.

Thinking I'm on top of it all I received a phone call from the Dairy Company. "Ah Gavin, I'm just informing you that we are changing our tanker configuration and unfortunately you will have to restructure your entranceway so the tanker can pick up your milk". Well at least I had a year to do it and a few more dollars from the same dairy company to spend on it. That invoice is still coming.

A lovely lady rang me recently and said, "Gavin- do you think farming clients are up to speed with ensuring their workers houses are compliant?" I said – "I doubt it" knowing full well most aren't! She responded – "I think they need help!" Well, you may as well start with my farm houses. Taking the appropriate step, I engaged her and received a very thorough report which suggested why I am legally obliged to get these houses to standard. – I said thank-you but yet more money to allocate.

Due to my excellent sharemilker, I do own jackets from our Dairy Company with the words "Grade Free" embroidered. BUT speaking of sharemilkers I've just met with mine to discuss animal welfare compliance – That's another article.

We as Accountants are compliance driven. Compliance is our life. The reason I wrote about this is to encourage our clients to talk to their accountants about it, see how we can help with revenue versus capital expenditure, depreciation rates, tax deductions and low interest loans. Furthermore, we want to make you aware of your legal obligations. We are anticipating helping our farmers more and more in this space as time goes on.

For the reasons above the Groundswell movement has gathered traction. Farmers are generally compliant but the volumes of policies are excessive and continue to increase and change.

I also hope our non-farming readers understand more about what the HOOHAA is all about.