



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*



# Thinking about living in the country?

## Some things to check

This brochure answers some of  
the frequently asked questions  
about living in the country



REAL ESTATE INSTITUTE OF NEW ZEALAND



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# it's paradise – right?

It can be but remember - the rural environment is where people live and work. That means it's both a beautiful landscape and a place of production.

Some production activities create effects that are noticeable on adjoining properties. Many of these effects are a necessary and legitimate part of rural production. Maybe not all day or all year – but sometimes, depending on the season, there might be:

- Noise** Dogs barking, farm machinery operating, planting or harvesting activities, stock being moved, bird scaring devices, truck movements in the early or late hours, stock noise at weaning time, helicopters
- Smell** Animal enclosures, silage, effluent disposal
- Smoke** Stubble burn-off or other fires
- Dust** Cultivation, planting and harvesting, vehicles on unsealed roads and driveways
- Spray** Agrichemical spraying of crops and paddocks

Look around the rural neighbourhood and see what's there. Think about how established activities might affect you.

Ask around – find out what day-to-day life is like in that rural area in all seasons.

Spend some time there – check it out in good weather and bad weather days and all wind directions.

## Can I do anything I want on my land?

It might pay to check. Usually you can – provided your activities don't cause adverse environmental effects.

Councils are responsible for managing the effects of activities and may have rules and bylaws controlling things like:

- house location and number of houses
- location of farm buildings and stock yards
- disposal of household sewage and stock effluent
- taking water from the ground or rivers
- discharges to ground and water
- burning of open fires
- distance of shelter belts and plantation forestry from boundaries
- noise
- removal of scrub or trees
- earthworks to build access tracks

There may be particular or additional controls in areas that have special landscape or ecological importance.

**Ask the council for a copy of the rules applying to your property and rural neighbourhood.**

Just as in town, it's important to get on with neighbours. The council can set basic guidelines or standards but, when it comes to managing minor matters, it's up to you and your neighbours.

**Make sure you can get hold of your neighbours if anything happens on their property that might affect you.**

**Why not tell your neighbours about anything you plan to do that might affect them?**





## Water and sewerage

Most rural properties have to provide for their own water supply and sewage disposal.

This usually means rain water has to be collected in tanks or water has to be pumped from waterways or an underground bore. If water is already piped onto the property from elsewhere, find out where it comes from and check that there is an easement or permission that allows this to continue – even in summer dry periods.

Sewage disposal is often to a septic tank. Septic tanks need to be emptied periodically.

It may be that you will need to install a new water supply or sewage disposal system – especially if the property is bare land.

**water supply and sewage disposal systems meet required standards and actually work.**

Rural landowners are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of water supply and sewage disposal systems – you'll need to know how to maintain pumps and clear blocked drains.



## Roads and driveways

District councils are responsible for local roads and Transit New Zealand is responsible for state highways. Private driveways are the responsibility of private landowners.

Check whether the access driveway from the public road is part of the property or crosses other land.

Make sure any right of way is recorded on the title.

Check that any right of way shown on paper matches up with the formed access.

Check the location of any dwelling in relation to other people's or shared driveways – vehicles using driveways can cause dust.

## Will my green rural outlook change?

The rural landscape is constantly changing. Change is a necessary and inevitable part of living in the country -

- farming methods change
- new types of rural production will occur
- crops (including trees) will be harvested
- land may be subdivided
- new people and new ideas will come

The council's rules are not intended to preserve things as they are now but to manage the environmental effects of ongoing changes.

Ask the council about its rules for rural subdivision and the location of buildings on adjoining land.



## Other things to check:

- Requirements for controlling serious weeds
- Responsibilities to control dogs and livestock
- The use of chemical sprays
- The location of emergency services (doctor, rural fire service)
- Power connection to the property



## How can I find out about all of that?

Visit your district council – they will be able to answer many of your questions.

The district council can give you a Land Information Memorandum (a ‘LIM’) which describes important details about any property. There will usually be a small fee – but it is a small price to pay for accurate information.

You might also like to talk to the regional council.

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