

Water restrictions: frequently asked questions

I have stock on my lifestyle property, like horses and chickens. Can I still provide them with water in their trough?

Yes.

I feed my family from my vegetable garden. Can I still water it?

Only if you are using recycled water, commonly known as grey water. Ways to use grey water include saving your used dishwater, or even placing a bucket in your shower while you wash to collect your shower water. You could also save your cooking water and, when it has cooled, use it on your garden .

Why are businesses still allowed to use their water blasters and other cleaning equipment?

At this stage, the restrictions only apply to domestic use. That means businesses or other commercial users can still use water blasters or car washes for example.

So if I breach the restrictions, what happens?

You may be liable for a fine of up to \$20,000.

How come Council didn't bring in these restrictions sooner?

Bringing in restrictions earlier would not have changed or delayed bringing in these restrictions now.

The timing of restrictions is entirely due to the flow rate of the Oreti River, which is decreasing due to a lack of rainfall and dry conditions, something which is outside the influence of the Invercargill City Council.

But doesn't the water in the river keep flowing past the water treatment plant anyway?

Absolutely, but the more water we take, the less there is to flow downstream. The restrictions have been made to help conserve and protect the Oreti River environment and ecosystems, like aquatic life. The environment is already stressed and under pressure by these dry conditions, and the more water removed, the worse the downstream environment could become.

So what happens if the current restrictions aren't enough?

If the river continues to reduce in flow, which is likely because of the dry weather and ground conditions, then the "limit" will be that Council cannot take more than 20 per cent of the available flow from the Oreti. The 20 per cent limit is likely to become an issue if the Oreti flow rate measured at the Riverton Highway Bridge falls below 1.8 cubic metres per second.

What is Council doing to reduce the risk of that happening?

Council can only enforce the restrictions, and urge residential water users to comply with the restrictions. If we cannot keep within the 20 per cent limit then businesses that use a lot of water may need to close. As of January 26, we are using about 10 per cent of the available flow.

What's all this about the Oreti flow rates?

Council has a permit to draw water from the Oreti River through Environment Southland. Under this permit, Council is required to bring in different restrictions when the Oreti River flow, as measured at the Riverton Highway bridge, reaches certain rates:

- At 4 cubic metres per second and below, Council must introduce restrictions banning domestic use of unattended hoses or sprinklers.
- At 3.2 metres per second and below, Council must introduce restrictions banning all domestic outside use of water.