

# Victorian Grazing and Intensive Animal Production Guidelines

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# Victorian Grazing and Intensive Animal Production Guidelines

## Purpose

These technical guidelines are to ensure a common interpretation of the land use terms *grazing animal production* and *intensive animal production*.

## Key points:

- ✓ These guidelines do not apply to pig farms, poultry farms or poultry hatcheries.

### Grazing animal production

- ✓ *Grazing animal production* applies to farms where grazing is a key component of the production system.
- ✓ *Grazing animal production* allows for three types of supplementary feeding: emergency, seasonal and supplementary feeding.
- ✓ It is common practice for producers to provide supplementary feed to their grazing animals.
- ✓ Dairy farms regularly provide supplementary feed to their animals either in the dairy, paddock and/or on a feedpad.
- ✓ The amount of feed provided for emergency, seasonal and supplementary feeding varies from incidental feeding up to 100 per cent of imported feed for a specified time or purpose.
- ✓ A planning permit for Buildings and Works is required for fixed feeding infrastructure used for seasonal or supplementary feeding located within 100 metres of a dwelling not in the same ownership, waterway, residential zone or Urban Growth Zone.
- ✓ A Buildings and Works permit is not required for temporary feeding infrastructure, such as hay rings.

### Intensive animal production

- ✓ *Intensive animal production* applies to farms where the animals' food is imported from outside the immediate building, enclosure, paddock or pen,
- ✓ *Intensive animal production* applies when the provision of imported feed exceeds what is allowed in *grazing animal production*.
- ✓ *Intensive animal production* applies to farms where there is no meaningful grazing integrated into the production system.

# 1. Purpose

The purpose of these technical guidelines is to:

- provide guidance on interpreting the land use terms *grazing animal production* and *intensive animal production* as they pertain to the *Victoria Planning Provisions* and all planning schemes in Victoria.
- to facilitate decision making on whether a planned or existing animal production system is *grazing animal production* or *intensive animal production*.

To achieve these outcomes, these guidelines:

- describe the various farming production systems common in Victoria.
- provide recommendations on how *grazing animal production* and *intensive animal production* should be interpreted in planning schemes.

## 2. Background

Animal industries are significant contributors to the Victorian economy. They are major employers in rural and regional Victoria and are the state's largest agricultural industry.

Victoria has around 20,000 commercial farms. Just over 15,000 of these farms focus on livestock, including dairy, beef, sheep, horses, goats, deer and other livestock. Victoria's many hobby farms and rural lifestyle properties also run livestock.

Most of Victoria's animal industries are grazing operations where animals are kept in paddocks

and graze pasture<sup>1</sup> to obtain food. Most producers also supplementary feed grazing animals to manage emergencies, seasonal conditions or for production purposes.

Some livestock farms use intensive feeding systems, where animals are not raised or kept on pasture. Grazing is not a key component of intensive feeding systems and producers often provide the animals with 100 per cent imported feed (e.g. grain or as a mixed ration of fodder, grain and/or concentrate or hay and silage).

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, reference is made to pasture (e.g. ryegrass and native pasture). For this document, pasture also includes fodder crops such as cereals and brassicas grown and fed to grazing animals.

### 3. Scope

These guidelines describe the planning controls for *grazing animal production* and *intensive animal production* and the various types of management practices and infrastructure expected to fit under these two definitions.

These guidelines apply to (but are not limited to):

- cattle - dairy
- cattle - beef
- sheep - meat, wool and dairy production
- goats - meat, dairy and fibre production
- deer - meat (venison)
- buffalo (meat and dairy) and bison meat
- alpacas and llamas - wool
- horses - raised for livestock production<sup>2</sup>
- camels - meat and dairy.

These guidelines do not apply to pig farms, poultry farms (e.g. chickens, ducks, emus, ostriches), or poultry hatcheries.

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<sup>2</sup> Horse stud farms, where horses are bred for the production of livestock, are *animal production* and are within the scope of these guidelines. However, horse agistment or keeping horses for recreational purposes is not *animal production* and is out of the scope of these guidelines.

## 4. Land use definitions

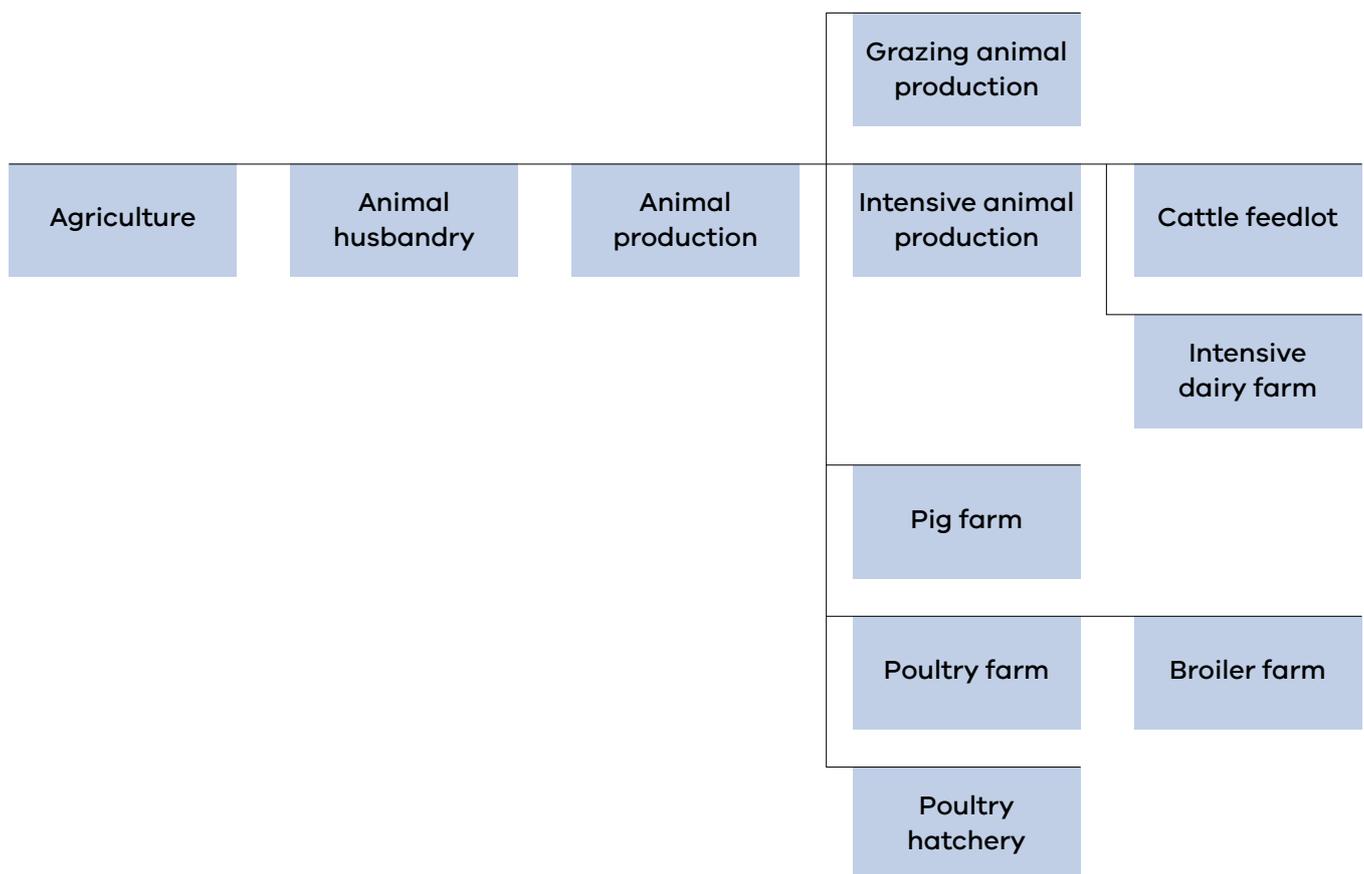
**Figure 1** shows the nesting diagram for the Agriculture sub-group of land use terms in the *Victoria Planning Provisions*.

*Grazing animal production* and *intensive animal production* are nested directly under the term *animal production*. This means, to be defined as *grazing animal production* or *intensive animal*

*production*, the use must also meet the definition of the terms it is nested under (i.e. animal production, animal husbandry and agriculture). *Cattle feedlot* and *intensive dairy farm* are nested under the land use term *intensive animal production*.

**Table 1** provides the definitions of the land use terms described in these guidelines.

**Figure 1: Clause 73.04-3 – Agriculture sub-group nesting diagram**



**Table 1: Land use definitions**

Term	Definition
<b>Animal production</b>	<i>Animal production</i> is land used to keep or breed farm animals for the production of livestock, eggs, fibre, meat, milk or other animal products.
<b>Grazing animal production</b>	<p><i>Grazing animal production</i> is land used for animal production where the animals' food is obtained by directly grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emergency, seasonal and supplementary feeding;</li> <li>• the incidental penning, feeding and housing of animals for weaning or other husbandry purposes.</li> </ul> <p>In this definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>emergency feeding</i> means providing feed to animals when an emergency event such as a flood, bushfire or biosecurity event restricts or prevents the animals from grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land;</li> <li>• <i>seasonal feeding</i> means providing feed to animals when seasonal conditions, such as over winter or during drought<sup>3</sup>, restrict or prevent the animals from grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land;</li> <li>• <i>supplementary feeding</i> means providing feed to animals to supplement the food the animals obtain by directly grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land.</li> </ul>
<b>Intensive animal production</b>	<p><i>Intensive animal production</i> is land used for animal production where the animals' food is imported from outside the immediate building, enclosure, paddock or pen. It does not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an abattoir or sale yard; or</li> <li>• grazing animal production, pig farm, poultry farm or poultry hatchery.</li> </ul>
<b>Cattle feedlot</b>	<p><i>Cattle feedlot</i> is land used for a cattle feedlot as defined by the <i>Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots 1995</i>.</p> <p>In the cattle code, cattle feedlots are defined as follows:</p> <p>Land on which cattle are restrained by pens or enclosures for the purposes of intensive feeding and includes any structure, work or area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in which such cattle are handled, fed, loaded and unloaded</li> <li>where the animal wastes from the feedlot are accumulated or treated pending removal or dispersal</li> <li>where the animal wastes from the feedlot are treated, placed or dispersed on the land</li> <li>in which facilities for feeding such cattle are maintained and the feed for such cattle is stored; or set aside for the purpose of landscaping and planting of vegetation.</li> </ol>
<b>Intensive dairy farm</b>	<i>Intensive dairy farm</i> is land used for <i>intensive animal production</i> where cattle are kept or bred for the production of milk.

<sup>3</sup> A drought is a prolonged period of low rainfall that results in water shortages in an area. For the purposes of this document drought should be considered in a general context and covers 'dry seasonal conditions'.

# 5. Grazing animal production

## 5.1. Planning controls

*Grazing animal production* is a Section 1 use in the main farming zones (Farming Zone, Rural Activity Zone, Green Wedge Zone), Urban Growth Zone and industrial zones. It is a Section 2 use in all other zones.

Zone	Grazing Animal Production
Farming Zone	Section 1
Rural Activity Zone	Section 1
Green Wedge Zone	Section 1
Green Wedge A Zone	Section 2
Rural Conservation Zone	Section 2
Rural Living Zone	Section 2
Urban Floodway Zone	Section 2
Urban Growth Zone	Section 1
Industrial zones	Section 1
Commercial zones	Section 2
Residential zones	Section 2

A Section 1 use means a planning permit is not required to use the land for *grazing animal production* in that zone<sup>4</sup>.

A Section 2 use means a planning permit is required to use the land for *grazing animal production* in that zone.

## 5.2. Source of animals' food

*Grazing animal production* applies to farms where grazing is a key component of the production system. If the system does not provide regular or routine opportunity for the animals to obtain part or all of their food by directly grazing/browsing/foraging (e.g. eating grass growing in the paddock), then the use would likely be *intensive animal production*.

It is common practice for producers with grazing animals to provide supplementary feed to their animals. Supplementary feed includes grain, pellets, hay and silage that may be grown on the farm and taken to the animals or purchased from a third party.

Producers often grow food for their animals on another part of the farm and then cut and carry the prepared feed to the animals. This practice is not 'directly grazing, browsing or foraging'. When producers cut and carry, they are supplementary feeding.

The amount or volume of supplementary feed provided to animals varies. Supplementary feed can be incidental or constitute 100 per cent of the animals' diet for a discrete period.

Producers provide supplementary feed to grazing animals:

- in emergencies
- to manage seasonal conditions
- for production purposes.

The provision of supplementary feed under these three scenarios is described below:

<sup>4</sup> Note, a planning permit is not required for use. A permit may still be required for another reason (e.g. to develop land).

### 5.2.1. Emergency feeding

*Emergency feeding means providing feed to animals when an emergency event such as a flood, bushfire or biosecurity event restricts or prevents the animals from grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land.*

In an emergency, such as a bushfire, flood or biosecurity event, producers may temporarily provide their animals with up to 100 per cent imported feed without requiring a planning permit. In emergencies, animals may not have access to any pasture/grazing (e.g. because the pasture has been burnt or is under water). Available land on which animals can be safely penned may be limited. Fences may be burnt or parts of the farm may be inaccessible. Producers are always required to care for their animals' health and welfare needs. During and immediately after emergencies, producers need to safely pen and feed their animals. This may involve penning animals in temporary facilities and providing 100 per cent of their diet through supplementary feed to manage the effects of the emergency. When the farm has recovered, the animals should be returned to paddock grazing, which may or may not include supplementary feeding.

### 5.2.2. Seasonal feeding

*Seasonal feeding means providing feed to animals when seasonal conditions, including drought, restrict or prevent the animals from grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land.*

Seasonal conditions affect the quantity and quality of food animals can obtain by grazing. When necessary, producers provide animals with supplementary feed to ensure they receive adequate nutrition for maintenance or production purposes. Supplementary feed is provided when the available pasture has minimal nutritional benefit, or no pasture remains because of adverse seasonal climatic conditions or drought. Seasonal conditions may require producers to provide 100 per cent imported feed for a discrete period.

Animals are sometimes confined to a specific paddock(s) or appropriately sited stock

containment area and provided supplementary feed. This is good farm management practice as it stops animals from wandering across large paddocks in search of food, prevents erosion and loss of ground cover, and maintains the health of the landscape.

Supplementary feeding to manage seasonal conditions should not continue on a permanent basis. Animals should return to grazing as soon as conditions improve and pasture becomes available. Even during drought, producers will use pastures as they become available, or allow animals to graze on stubble or crops.

### 5.2.3. Supplementary feeding

*Supplementary feeding means providing feed to animals to supplement the food the animals obtain by directly grazing, browsing or foraging plants growing on the land.*

As already outlined, a common grazing management tool is to provide supplementary feed to maintain animal health or increase body weight. The amount or volume of supplementary feed provided to animals varies.

Grazing production systems should routinely provide enough pasture for all animals in the paddock to directly graze, browse or forage on plants growing on the land.

There are production and market-based reasons for providing supplementary feed to boost nutrition or optimise the animals' condition. For example, supplementary feed is provided to animals so they:

- reach their target body weight prior to joining (mating)
- maintain nutrition requirements for production
- reach uniform weight or market specifications prior to sale
- manage the transition period, either during gestation, or post birth.

#### 5.2.4. Stock containment areas

Stock containment areas (e.g. **Photographs 1 and 2**) can be used to confine, feed and water animals in response to an emergency event or adverse seasonal climatic conditions. Producers are encouraged to plan and prepare for drought by having stock containment areas. The benefits of stock containment include preventing erosion, maintaining groundcover and optimising pasture recovery after prolonged dry periods.

Additional information on the construction, location and use of stock containment areas can be found at:

[agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/livestock-after-an-emergency/stock-containment-areas](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/livestock-after-an-emergency/stock-containment-areas)

[agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought/managing-resources-in-drought](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought/managing-resources-in-drought)

Producers often use stock containment areas to pen animals for other husbandry purposes (e.g. shearing, treatments or yarding before transporting off farm).

Stock containment areas used for emergency, seasonal or supplementary feeding are included in *grazing animal production*.

If there is any intent to construct and operate a stock containment area as a permanent feeding system, the use is likely *intensive animal production*.



Photograph 1  
Sheep in a stock containment area with lick feeder



Photograph 2  
Sheep in a stock containment area with shade provided

### 5.2.5. Dairy feedpads

Dairy farms regularly provide supplementary feed to their animals either in the dairy, paddock and/or on a feedpad. Supplementary feed is provided to:

- heifers to ensure they reach a specific weight prior to mating
- lactating dairy cows
- sustain the health of dry herds (non-lactating cows).

A feedpad is an enclosed area where dairy cattle are provided with part of their daily feed requirement as imported feed (e.g. hay, silage, grain or mixed feed) for all or part of the year. An effectively sited, designed, constructed and managed feedpad should provide cattle with easy access to feed, minimise feed wastage and prevent adverse impacts on community amenity and the surrounding environment.

Feedpads are usually constructed near the dairy and allow cows to feed either prior to or after milking (before animals are returned to pastures). A feedpad, used as part of a grazing production system, is allowable under *grazing animal production*. However, consideration must be given to the responsible siting, design and management of the feedpad.

The *Guidelines for Victorian Dairy Feedpads and Freestalls* outline the responsible design, construction and management of feedpads. A Buildings and Works permit may be required to construct a feedpad (see Section 5.4).

## 5.3. Incidental penning, feeding and housing of animals for weaning or other husbandry purposes

Sometimes producers will confine animals for short periods in stock handling yards or small paddocks near shearing or dairy sheds for routine husbandry activities, such as vaccination, weighing, calving (dairy farm springer herd), shearing and/or weaning. Food and water is provided if activities extend over several days.

Calves on beef farms are typically weaned (separated from their mothers and milk) at 7-10 months of age. Weaning allows the cow to improve her own condition and prepare herself for the next calving.

Beef calves can be 'yard weaned'. This process confines the calves in a large yard in or near handling yards, or in a small paddock where they are given supplementary feed (e.g. hay or silage) and water. The benefits are:

- accustoming the calves to the yards, handling and being worked through the yards
- introducing calves to handfeeding
- group socialisation, which may reduce stress and disease in later life
- as adults, the cattle are quieter and easier to handle in sale and abattoir yards
- reduced losses in growth and weight associated with the stress of weaning.

The weaning and training program may last 10-14 days and includes feeding, drafting and yarding from adjoining paddocks.

Dairy producers separate calves from their mothers within 24-48 hours of birth. Calves are shifted into a shed and provided feed (e.g. fresh milk or mixed powdered milk), water and straw. Alternatively, they are housed individually in small pens and provided feed and water. After 5-7 days, calves may be allowed access to outdoor pens or paddocks or shifted into small paddocks and grouped with similar age/weight calves, with continued access to feed and water. At 10-12 weeks old, calves are typically weaned from milk, then shifted into larger paddocks further from the dairy, with access to pasture.

Sheep and goat producers wean lambs and kids at 12-16 weeks old. It is not as common for these animals to be yard weaned. Typically, they are separated from their mothers then returned to a paddock away from their mothers'.

These weaning and husbandry practices constitute incidental penning, feeding and housing of animals for weaning or other husbandry purposes, and are therefore included under *grazing animal production*.

**To determine if a production system is *grazing animal production*, consider the following:**

- Do the animals regularly have access to pasture for meaningful grazing purposes?
- Is supplementary feeding conducted for specific purposes that are part of a grazing production system?
- In general, can the property sustain regular grazing?

If the answer is 'yes' to all, the use is likely *grazing animal production*.

## 5.4. Feeding infrastructure

A wide variety of infrastructure is used to supplementary feed animals. Feeding infrastructure can be fixed or moveable. Fixed feeding infrastructure has a higher capital cost than moveable feeding infrastructure, which is relatively cheap and easily scalable.

### 5.4.1. Fixed feeding infrastructure in *grazing animal production*

**Photographs 3 and 4** are examples of *grazing animal production* where fixed feeding infrastructure is used for supplementary feeding. Dairy farms often use this type of infrastructure to regularly supplementary feed dairy cattle (e.g. pre and post-milking). Dairy cattle are provided with supplementary feed on the feedpads and are then returned to paddocks where they continue to obtain food by grazing.

## Fixed feeding infrastructure



Photograph 3  
Concrete feedpad



Photograph 4  
Concrete feedpad

### Permit requirements for use of fixed feeding infrastructure in grazing animal production

A planning permit for Buildings and Works is required for fixed feeding infrastructure used for seasonal feeding or supplementary feeding if it is to be located within any of the following setbacks:

- 100 metres from a waterway, wetlands or designated floodplain (as defined by the *Water Act 1996* and its amendments)
- 100 metres from a dwelling not in the same ownership
- 100 metres from a residential zone or the Urban Growth Zone.

A Buildings and Works permit is NOT required for:

- feed storage infrastructure, such as hay sheds, silos and silage bunkers (so long as the feed storage infrastructure is not directly connected to the feeding infrastructure - e.g. an automatic feed system from a grain silo to feed troughs or lick feeders)
- fixed feeding infrastructure constructed prior to 21 September 2018.

### NOTE:

- Even if setbacks can be achieved, a planning permit may be required due to another trigger, such as an overlay.
- Some infrastructure may require a planning permit even if setbacks are achieved (e.g. covered animal housing that requires structural footings below the natural ground surface).
- While a planning permit is not required if fixed feeding infrastructure meets these setbacks, producers should have regard to the scale of their operation, the future intended use of the facility, and its potential for environmental and amenity impacts.
- Larger setbacks may be required to manage environmental and community amenity impacts.

It is highly recommended producers consult local government prior to constructing fixed feeding infrastructure.

## 5.4.2. What is a waterway?

Waterways are rivers and their associated estuaries and floodplains (including floodplain wetlands) and non-riverine wetlands<sup>5</sup>. Collectively these are referred to as waterways and can include:

- a river, creek, stream or watercourse
- a natural channel in which water regularly flows, whether or not flow is continuous
- a lake, lagoon, swamp or marsh
- land that is regularly covered by water from a waterway
- any land that forms part of a slope rising from the waterway to a definite lip.

In most cases, a Country Fire Authority (CFA) 1:250,000 topographic map can help to identify waterways, particularly in hilly country. The CFA map will show blue lines indicating the location of waterways. A formal determination of what constitutes a waterway can be accessed through the Rural Water Authorities, who can do a determination based on upstream catchment size. Typically, any 'drainage line' in a catchment with an upstream area greater than 60 hectares is likely to be defined as a waterway.

## 5.4.3. Movable feeding infrastructure in grazing animal production

Moveable feeding infrastructure (e.g. **Photographs 5 to 9**) should be shifted regularly around the paddocks to ensure animals have easy access to sufficient pasture. When a paddock's groundcover is reduced below 70 per cent, it is considered good land management practice to shift feeders and animals into a new paddock with more pasture/crop. The paddock is then spelled (i.e. no animals in the paddock) and the groundcover is allowed to regenerate before animals are re-introduced to the paddock.

Examples of moveable feeding infrastructure used in *grazing animal production* are shown below:

### Permit requirements for use of mobile feeding infrastructure in grazing animal production

A Buildings and Works permit is not required for moveable feeding infrastructure. This is because good management can mitigate the environmental and amenity impacts potentially associated with use of this infrastructure.

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<sup>5</sup> This definition of a waterway is based on the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy. This definition does not replace other important definitions of the term 'waterways' such as the specific definition in the *Water Act 1989*.

## Moveable feeding infrastructure



Photograph 5  
Modular moveable hay troughs



Photograph 6  
Hay ring



Photograph 7  
Moveable concrete feed troughs



Photograph 8  
Grain lick feeder



Photograph 9  
Grain lick feeder

#### 5.4.4. Impacts associated with the use of feeding infrastructure

Supplementary feeding can pose several environmental and amenity risks if good farm monitoring and management are not maintained. This is because it encourages a higher concentration of animals around feeding points.

Regular supplementary feeding can lead to groundcover loss and accumulation of manure (faeces and urine). Problems are generally in high-use areas near feeders, watering points, gateways, shade or shelter. Poor practices can affect the environment and local amenity, encouraging nuisance odour, dust, noise, flies and nutrient excesses/ imbalances in the soil, groundwater contamination and eutrophication of waterways.

One key to mitigating impacts is appropriate siting to provide a physical buffer to the closest neighbouring land use or environmental feature (e.g. waterway). Another is to regularly shift feeders or rotate animals around paddocks used for seasonal or supplementary feeding. Thoughtful siting should allow any odour, dust, noise and/or

flies to diffuse over distance to an acceptable intensity. Moving feeders or animals also improves the ability to maintain groundcover and disperse manure load.

Moveable feeding infrastructure is most common for sheep and beef cattle grazing and can allow smaller groups of animals to be fed supplementary feed in several paddocks across the farm, increasing the likelihood of maintaining groundcover and dispersing manure over more farm area.

Fixed feeding infrastructure requires detailed planning and routine management to mitigate effects. Fixed feeding infrastructure is not moved, therefore there is a higher risk of nutrient concentration in nearby soils over time. Odour and flies can also be an issue in heavily stocked areas where animals are fed. Spelling paddocks (i.e. having no animals in a paddock for a period) and/or re-sowing paddocks is important to regenerate groundcover and manage soil nutrient accumulation.

## 6. Intensive animal production

### 6.1. Planning controls

#### 6.1.1. Intensive animal production

*Intensive animal production* is a Section 2 use (planning permit is required) in the main farming zones (Farming Zone, Rural Activity Zone, Green Wedge Zone), and a Section 3 use (prohibited) in all other zones.

Zone	Intensive animal production	Cattle Feedlot
<b>Farming Zone</b>	Section 2	Section 1* / 2*
<b>Rural Activity Zone</b>	Section 2	Section 1* / 2*
<b>Green Wedge Zone</b>	Section 2	Section 2*
<b>Green Wedge A Zone</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Rural Conservation Zone</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Rural Living Zone</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Urban Floodway Zone</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Urban Growth Zone</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Industrial zones</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Commercial zones</b>	Section 3	Section 3
<b>Residential zones</b>	Section 3	Section 3

\* If specified conditions are not met, the use becomes a section 2 use (permit required) or section 3 use (prohibited).

#### 6.1.2. Cattle feedlot

The Particular Provision for *Cattle feedlot* is at Clause 53.08 of the *Victorian Planning Provisions*. Cattle Feedlots are a specific type of intensive beef production and are defined in the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots – August 1995*.

All use and development of beef cattle feedlots must comply with the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots - August 1995*. The Code must be complied with to the satisfaction of the responsible authority (e.g. the council).

##### **Cattle feedlots of up to 1000 cattle:**

A planning permit is not required to use land for a cattle feedlot with up to 1000 cattle in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone. However, the use must still comply with the requirements of the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (1995)* to the satisfaction of the responsible authority, and meet other conditions specified in the zones. Feedlots are prohibited in several declared water supply catchments across Victoria (see Appendix 2 of the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (1995)*).

Feedlots with less than 50 head of cattle in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone must be sited outside a declared water supply catchment or designated flood plain. These feedlots also need to meet the following mandatory setbacks:

- 300 metres from a neighbouring dwelling
- 200 metres from a waterway or any road
- 800 metres from a potable water supply, the take-off point or a bore supplying potable water.

Setbacks for feedlots with more than 50 head of cattle are also required but are calculated on a case-by-case basis using a range of factors including stocking density, distance to sensitive receptors, receptor type, terrain and vegetation cover.

### 6.1.3. Intensive dairy farm

Currently, *intensive dairy farm* is not referenced separately in zoning tables. *Intensive dairy farms* therefore have the same planning controls as *intensive animal production*. There is no Code of Practice for *intensive dairy farms*. However, the following publication can help guide decision-making:

***Guidelines for Victorian Dairy Feedpads and Freestalls* ([dairyinfrastructure.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/DPI\\_feedpads-design-pub.pdf](http://dairyinfrastructure.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/DPI_feedpads-design-pub.pdf))**

The *Guidelines for Victorian Dairy Feedpads and Freestalls* aim to provide referral agencies, service providers and Victorian dairy producers with a clear and concise overview of all elements requiring consideration when producers undertake the initial development and longer-term management of these facilities. The information in these guidelines covers both feedpads (allowed under *grazing animal production*) and freestalls (which would be considered *intensive dairy farm*).

## 6.2. Source of animals' food

In *intensive animal production*, the animals' food is regularly imported. Farms that do not integrate meaningful grazing into their production system are likely *intensive animal production*.

The provision or availability of nominal, incidental or minimal grazing is not sufficient for a farm to be considered *grazing animal production*.

## 6.3. Feedlot and intensive dairy farm land use examples

### 6.3.1. Feedlots

In addition to beef cattle feedlots, many farms that are *intensive animal production* are commonly known as a 'feedlot'.

Examples include:

- goat feedlots for meat or milk production
- sheep feedlots for meat production
- camel feedlots for milk production.

Feedlots are used to:

- provide a consistent supply of feed to animals so they reach consistent weight and product specifications prior to slaughter
- feed animals close to a milking shed.

Beef cattle are typically kept in feedlots for up to 120 days for the domestic market, and for 100 to 400 days for the export market. Sheep and goats are typically kept in feedlots for 30 to 50 days.

A feedlot normally consists of a set of pens in which animals are confined, fed, watered and cared for. Examples of beef and sheep feedlots are provided in **Photographs 20** (beef) and **22** (sheep).

### 6.3.2. Intensive dairy farms

*Intensive dairy farm* includes several different management systems. The names of Australian dairy systems typically relate to the bedding design and bedding type. Different bedding designs and types are used to provide a comfortable, soft lying surface for the cows, to absorb moisture, and to assist with hygiene in the cow housing facility by minimising bacterial growth. The common types found in Australia include:

**Freestall:** In a freestall facility, bedding will usually be a deep bed system or a mattress-based system. For a deep bed system, bedding material is placed in each stall on the housing base to a depth of at least 15 cm (25 cm for sand). Mattresses for freestalls consist of a tough fabric material, such as heavy weight polypropylene, that is stuffed with a filling such as shredded rubber, water or gel. A mattress is fitted in each stall and then top-dressed with additional bedding material to absorb moisture (see **Photographs 11** and **16**).

**Loose housing:** In a loose housing facility the bedding is usually operated as a deep litter (straw) system or a compost pack. Many different organic materials can be used for a compost pack system, provided they maintain a coarse particle size, do not clump together or compact excessively, and can be tilled easily. They also need to be readily absorbent (see **Photographs 12** and **13**)

**Feedlot:** Minimal bedding is provided on the compacted clay pen surface. Accumulated manure may be tilled to provide a comfortable area for the cattle lie (see **Photographs 10** and **18**).

Modern dairy farms divide the animals into different management units depending on the animals' age, nutritional needs, reproductive status and milk production status. The lactating milking herd is often managed most intensively to ensure their diet and environmental conditions are conducive to producing as much high-quality milk as possible. On an intensive dairy farm, the milking herd and/or heifers (and on some farms the entire herd) are confined in an intensive housing facility and fed 100 per cent imported feed.

**Photographs 10** to **13** show examples of the infrastructure used in *intensive dairy farms*.

## Intensive dairy farms



**Photograph 10**  
Outdoor feedlot (with no meaningful grazing)



**Photograph 11**  
Freestall



Photograph 12  
Loose housing – deep litter bedding



Photograph 13  
Loose housing – deep litter bedding

An *intensive dairy farm* with an outdoor loafing area attached to the facility is not *grazing animal production*. Such outdoor areas may provide incidental grazing, but the production system is not designed around grazing as the main and routine way animals receive their nutrition. These systems are *intensive dairy farms*.

### 6.3.3. Other enclosures and stock containment areas that are intensive animal production

If a producer constantly uses a specific area of the farm to provide animals 100 per cent imported feed, even when pasture is available, the use of that land is likely *intensive animal production*.

A typical example of an intensive system is where the farmer buys livestock and fattens them for market in a paddock using imported feed. When those animals are sent to market, the farmer purchases more stock to fatten in the same system, and so on.

Sometimes a stock containment area that was used for managing livestock during a drought is converted to a permanent intensive feeding system, as the farmer sees production benefits. When this occurs, the stock containment area becomes *intensive animal production*.

For example, **Photograph 14** shows a paddock in a beef cattle grazing property that was originally developed as a stock containment area for beef cattle. The containment area was constructed to manage dry seasonal conditions. However, after good rainfall and subsequent pasture growth, the farm continued to use the stock containment area to fatten calves born on the farm and sourced from local saleyards. Batches of young beef cattle were confined in this paddock year-round and provided 100 per cent imported feed, with no access to meaningful grazing. This is an example of a farm that should seek approval to operate as *intensive animal production* for this specific part of the farm. The rest of the property is *grazing animal production*.

*Intensive animal production* farms may not meet the specific definition of 'cattle feedlot' as per the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots* (e.g. **Photograph 14**). However, a planning permit for *intensive animal production* will still be required.

If a paddock is used temporarily to manage seasonal or emergency conditions or for production purposes associated with grazing, the use is likely *grazing animal production*. In this scenario, the siting of the paddock and management of the stock should take in account the potential impacts on the environment and community, as per the guidance provided for stock containment areas on the Agriculture Victoria website.

[agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/livestock-after-an-emergency/stock-containment-areas](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/livestock-after-an-emergency/stock-containment-areas)

The producer must also meet other relevant environmental legislation.



**Photograph 14**  
Cattle feedlot with no grazing. If the paddock is used temporarily to support a grazing operation, the use may be *grazing animal production*. If the land is constantly used to provide animals 100 per cent imported feed, the use of that land is likely *intensive animal production*.

# 7. Grazing vs intensive animal production

The following **photographs 15 to 22** and **Table 2** provide examples of typical grazing and intensive animal production land uses:

	Grazing animal production	Intensive animal production
Dairy	 <p><b>Photograph 15</b> Supplementary feeding with fixed feeding infrastructure in conjunction with grazing</p>	 <p><b>Photograph 16</b> Freestall with fixed feeding infrastructure and no grazing</p>
Dairy	 <p><b>Photograph 17</b> Supplementary feeding with moveable feeding infrastructure in conjunction with grazing</p>	 <p><b>Photograph 18</b> Dairy feedlot with fixed feeding infrastructure and no grazing</p>
Beef	 <p><b>Photograph 19</b> Supplementary feeding with moveable feeding infrastructure in conjunction with grazing</p>	 <p><b>Photograph 20</b> Beef feedlot with fixed feeding infrastructure and no grazing</p>
Sheep	 <p><b>Photograph 21</b> Supplementary feeding with moveable feeding infrastructure in conjunction with grazing</p>	 <p><b>Photograph 22</b> Sheep feedlot with fixed feeding infrastructure and no grazing</p>

**Table 2: Examples of feeding areas or infrastructure that are part of grazing animal production**

Example	Grazing animal production	Intensive animal production	Cattle feedlot	Intensive dairy farm
Paddocks that grow feed where it is consumed by grazing, browsing or foraging	✓			
Paddocks containing crops or crop stubble upon which animals graze	✓			
Stock containment areas for drought feeding	✓			
Yards or pens used for incidental penning, weaning, shearing, or other husbandry practices	✓			
Yards, pens or paddocks used for short periods of time to 'fatten' animals prior to market with access to meaningful grazing	✓			
Yards, pens or paddocks used for long periods of time to 'fatten' animals prior to market without access to meaningful grazing		✓	✓	
Dairy feedpads used to provide supplementary feed in conjunction with meaningful grazing	✓			
Stock containment areas, yards, pens or paddocks used to routinely fatten animals for meat production		✓	✓	
A dairy farm with a freestall, loose housing or feedlot facility				✓
A farm with an outdoor loafing area attached to a freestall, loose housing or feedlot facility				✓
Beef cattle feedlot where the land is used and the containment system is constructed in a manner that fits the definition of feedlot under the <i>'Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots'</i>			✓	
Intensive beef feeding system where the beef cattle are penned and fed with imported feed, but the system does not meet the definition of cattle feedlot under the <i>'Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots'</i>		✓		
Other intensive feeding system for sheep, goats, camels, buffalo etc		✓		

## 8. References

O'Keefe M, Chamberlain P, Chaplin S, Davison T, Green J, Tucker, R 2010, *Guidelines for Victorian Dairy Feedpads and Freestalls* – First Edition, 2010, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria.

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources 2018, *Livestock Farm Monitor Project Victoria 2016-17*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria

