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Alan Thompson

By email: fyi-request-14908-67da93c2@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Alan

Information Request – Grass Curing Measurements

I refer to your official information request dated 12 March 2021 asking for information about grass curing measurements.

I first answer your general questions:

- a) *How many “Degree of Grass Curing” measurements are typically conducted at/near every RAWs across NZ during a 12-month period?*
- b) *What is the procedure/standards followed by FENZ to make these GC measurements? A copy of the FENZ instruction manual is preferred.*

Monitoring fire danger and conditions is an integral part of Fire and Emergency’s risk reduction activities. We work with NIWA to utilise long range climate forecasting, which assists with our planning for specific fire conditions each fire season. Our operational personnel monitor conditions and assist in the provision of certain data (e.g. grass curing values) as the fire season progresses and are always alert to when conditions are changing.

Grass curing is one measure used to inform our understanding of the fire risk within grass fuels. Grass curing is the process in which grasses die or become dormant and dry out. Curing is measured as the percentage of dead material in a grassland. The specific conditions each fire season are different which means the timing, rate and levels of grass curing vary between years and across districts.

As the timing and rates of curing vary year to year and between districts, there is no set base level of frequency in assessing grass curing. When our personnel observe changing grass conditions it prompts more formal measurements to be undertaken. It is therefore not possible to provide you with a typical timeframe for conducting measurements.

Fire and Emergency is currently working to adapt the Grassland Curing Guide developed by the Country Fire Authority in Australia for use in New Zealand. In the interim, Fire and Emergency has been granted permission to use the guide. I attach a copy for your reference.

You also asked the following specific questions regarding the Remutaka Remote Automatic Weather Station (RAWS) at Remutaka Forest Park:

- a) *How many "Degree of Grass Curing" measurements are typically conducted during a rural fire season (1 Oct - 31 March)?*
- b) *How many "Degree of Grass Curing" measurements are typically conducted outside of the rural fire season?*
- c) *The geographic location where the Grass Curing measurement for the RFP RAWS are made?*
- d) *What is the procedure/standards followed by FENZ to make the GC measurement at/near the RFP RAWS? A copy of the FENZ instruction manual for this process is preferred.*

During the fire season, Fire and Emergency New Zealand typically undertakes weekly desktop reviews of grass curing around the Wellington District. These reviews include input from Rural Fire Officers, who are regularly in the field.

Typically, during the fire season, grass curing observations/measurements are taken monthly at the Remutaka Remote Automatic Weather Stations (RAWS). These measurements are made within 1000 metres of the RAWS, in ungrazed grass. These observations/measurements drop to bimonthly during the off season.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Note this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Fire and Emergency website.

Yours sincerely



Raewyn Bleakley
Deputy Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Executive

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