

Student 6: The Environmental Impact of Dairy Farming.

Water.

The number one problem that affects New Zealand's waterways is dairy farm effluent. Most dairy farms in New Zealand don't have an effective effluent disposal system, so the effluent that is being released into waterways isn't fully treated. This causes a deterioration in drinking quality especially in slow flowing rivers and streams as the effluent is aerated like it is in fast flowing water which breaks it down. Because of the effluent in the rivers and streams drinking water has to be treated to account for effluent.

Another major concern to New Zealand's water quality is fertilisers leeching into waterways. Because dairy farming is intensive the farmer must use fertilisers to boost crop yields to get better production. Excess fertiliser can leech through soils and into waterways causing and increase in nitrates in the water, this increased the amount of aquatic plant life (weeds) which over time decrease the oxygen levels (1).