

Spraying Drains

Should I be spraying the roadside drain in front of my property?

If the drain has a permanent base flow of water, it is connected to the network of spring fed waterways that eventually flow into the Ashley or Waimakariri Rivers, and eventually out to sea. These drains are important spawning and migration habitat for native fish such as inanga (whitebait) and eel. It is important that we manage these waterways for the wellbeing of fish and insects that live in them.

Some sprays are not recommended for use over water, specially those with additives such as surfactants and dyes, as these can be toxic to fish and insects.

What happens when the banks of these waterways are sprayed?

The vegetation dies and bare banks are exposed to repeated drying and wetting cycles which causes cracking and destabilising. Sediment is washed into the water, and too much will smother the stream environment along with creatures that live in this habitat. Unstable banks leads to bank failure, which is difficult and expensive to fix.

Over-spraying causing bank instability could be in breach of the Council's Drainage and Watercourse Protection Bylaw 2024, and the costs of repairs may be recovered from the landowner.



An example of a well maintained drain with good vegetation cover on the banks.



An example of a poorly maintained drain with over-sprayed vegetation which is causing bank instability.

What is the alternative to spraying

Dense vegetation planted along the drain banks provides the important stability of the banks but also provides shade and habitat for instream life. Good shade will also minimise excessive macrophyte growth such as watercress and monkey musk.

Less macrophyte growth and less sediment entering the waterway means less mechanical maintenance and a better environment for fish.

A drain can be kept reasonably tidy by weed eating the banks. This retains the all-important bank vegetation, as well as reducing the risk of harm to aquatic life within the drain.

Find out more at waimakariri.govt.nz, or contact Customer Services on 0800 965 468.