

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DRYLAND SALINITY?

Even though dryland salinity is a well-known problem in rural Australia, it is sometimes hard to recognise the early signs of salinity until the impact becomes severe. Here are some events that may indicate salinity. If you recognise one or more of these on your property and believe you have a salinity problem, you should seek advice on early action you can take to prevent the problem becoming more severe. (see contacts below). These signs are likely to occur at the bottom of slopes and in drainage depressions and be known as 'discharge' sites.

1. **Waterlogged soil and areas of new wet patches.**
Waterlogging does not indicate salinity in every case, but is an early warning sign.
2. **Trees dying**
As the saline groundwater table rises, trees begin to die for no apparent reason, usually before any impact on pastures is evident.
3. **Loss of productive annual and perennial vegetation species**
As the ground becomes more saline, annual and perennial species die. Often, in their place grow more salt tolerant plants, such as sea barley grass, couch, annual beard grass, spike rush or strawberry clover.
4. **Bare patches of soil**
Bare areas of soil appear and become larger. The soil may also set hard as it dries out. Often referred to as a 'salt scald'.
5. **The area attracts stock**
Stock love to lick the salt from the ground, and usually gather together in a large group around the saline area.
6. **Visible salt crystals**
When the surface is dry, salt crystals appear on the surface of the soil. It may look like white dust or powder.
7. **Puffy soil**
When dry, the surface of the soil is "puffy" and shatters when walked on.
8. **Excess water runoff**
The area is eroding from large quantities of water runoff.
9. **Clear dam water**
Water in dams close to the site tends to be quite clear as the salt settles the sediment.
10. **A salty smell**
Salt can be smelt in the area.

Who can help?

Department of Land and Water Conservation, Yass Office. Phone (02) 6226 1433