The high country [3] describes an area of land more than 600 metres above sea level, which is mainly covered by tussock and often used to farm sheep or cattle.

New Zealand is a land that has been uplifted along the boundary of the Indo Australian Plate and the Pacific Plate. This uplift has created large areas of high country, particularly in the South Island along the foothills of the Southern Alps.

Location

High country is a New Zealand term for the elevated land of the South Island and - to a lesser extent - the North Island of New Zealand. This terrain lies in the rain shadow of the country's mountain ranges and tends to be used for farming.

Climate

The climate is not moderated by the ocean. This continental climate has low rainfall, cold winters and hot summers. This climate of extremes has led to plants and animals developing special adaptations to survive. The high country is home to many unique plants and animals, some of which are threatened, such as the black stilt.

Farming

Livestock farmed in these regions include sheep and some deer and alpaca. Most farms or stations have only a few animals per hectare, usually sheep or cattle. This type of farming is known as extensive farming [4] where the amount of fertiliser, labour and money spent is small compared with the amount of land that is farmed.

With the help of irrigation some areas have been converted into more intensive dairy farms [5].

The major natural ground-cover plant in the high country is tussock.

Regions

High country regions of New Zealand include:
• Central Otago
• Mackenzie Basin
• parts of the North Island Volcanic Plateau.

Much of the land is at a high altitude (hence its name), with the majority of the high country being more than 600 metres above sea level.

Some high country stations grazed by leasehold farmers are up for tenure review, a process of turning it into freehold or conservation land.

**Challenges**

A number of conservation issues affect the high country, including:

• wilding pines
• **hieracium** [6]
• soil erosion
• rabbit plagues

You could find out more about these issues and what is being done to manage them.

New Zealand has large areas of high country, mainly in the South Island along the foothills of the Southern Alps. The words 'high country' are usually used to describe land east of the Southern Alps that can be used for farming.

**Climate**

The climate in the high country is harsh with low rainfall, cold winters and hot summers. This climate only suits certain plants and animals. The high country is home to unique plants and animals, some of which are threatened, such as the black stilt.

**Farming**

Animals farmed in the high country include;

• sheep
• cattle
• deer
• alpaca.

Most farms or stations have only a few animals per hectare, usually sheep or cattle. This type of farming is known as **extensive farming** [7] where the amount of fertiliser, labour and money spent is small compared with the amount of land that is
farmed.

With the help of irrigation some areas have become more intensive dairy farms [5].

In areas that are not farmed the main plant is tussock.

**Regions**

High country regions of New Zealand include;

- Central Otago
- Mackenzie Basin
- parts of the North Island Volcanic Plateau.

Much of the land is at a high altitude (hence its name), with most of the high country being more than 600 metres above sea level.

**Challenges**

A number of conservation issues affect the high country, including;

- wilding pines
- *hieracium* [6](a weed)
- soil erosion
- rabbit plagues

*You could find out more about these issues and what is being done to manage them.*

Māori keywords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pākihi</th>
<th>open country, grasslands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teitei</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāmu</td>
<td>farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipi</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whenua</td>
<td>land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Audio Māori keywords:

- *pākahi - open country, grasslands* [8]
- *teitei - high* [9]
- *whenua - land* [10]
- *pāmu - farm* [11]
- *hipi - sheep* [12]

*How do you think the high country has changed since Māori and European...*
settlement in Aotearoa, New Zealand?

How do you think the high country has changed since Māori and European settlement in Aotearoa, New Zealand?

The high country describes an area of land over 600 metres above sea level. Image: LEARNZ.

Much of the high country not used for farming is covered in tussock. Image: LEARNZ.
Merino sheep farms are common in the high country. What other types of farms are there in the high country? Image: Phillip Capper.