

Recovery from a natural disaster

It's easy to become overwhelmed after a disaster. It may help to take a bit of time to jot down all the jobs that need to be done. The headings below and the attached table may help you put things in priority order.

People

Your business's recovery could be set-back if you rush or make poor decisions – try to include sufficient 'down-time' to ensure you are fit and healthy enough to navigate the path ahead.

Use a trusted adviser to work through different options and strategies – does the event provide any opportunities for process or farm design improvements?

Review your staffing needs – are there resources and government assistance available to help?

Take time to communicate your plans to family and employees.

Stock

Try to re-establish the milking routine, as soon as possible after the event.

Safe stock containment is critical so check/reposition electric fences and prioritise boundary fences.

Consider how best to use paid contractors or any local offers for help – clearing debris and essential repairs will likely need to be done promptly to minimise business disruption.

Check water supply – has there been any damage to pumps or contamination of home or dairy water supply?

Check drains to see if they are clear.

Animal welfare

Thoroughly assess sick or injured stock. If recovery is unlikely (e.g. from clinical mastitis, burns or lameness), consider humane destruction.

Be practical – time spent on poor prognosis animals could distract you from providing more care to the rest of the herd.

Feed/Nutrition

Write down an inventory of feed availability and accessibility – use it to budget daily cow requirements.

Wherever possible make feed mix changes slowly.

After a stressful event, reintroduce a fibre source (hay) and consider using causemag (MgO at 60grams/cow/day) over the hay to reduce the chance of grass tetany (hypomagnesemia).

Check hay stores for mould or risk of spontaneous combustion.

Health

Mastitis

If labour resources allow; reduce the risk of clinical mastitis by the following steps:

- › Wash and dry all teats before cups go on (1 paper towel per cow)
- › Strip cows every day to detect, treat and isolate clinical cases
- › Aim to cover 100% of teat skin with teat disinfectant
- › Keep teats clean for an hour after the cows leave the shed, and
- › Set up feeding and other routines so cows don't lie down soon after milking.

Lameness

Identify lame cows and separate into smaller groups, close to the dairy, on the best feed available - consider milking them once a day.

Treat lame cows as soon as possible – it will be a win/win for their welfare and your business (Remember to observe any withhold periods for treated cows).

Be extra patient when moving all cows – tell staff to expect it to take twice as long as usual. Reschedule staff working hours to accommodate the change in routine.

Try to keep yard concrete clear of stones to reduce injury to soft feet - e.g. putting in a 125mm post at the entrance to the yard will help reduce the stones lifted onto the yard.

Consider using material (>30cm deep) over parts of the laneways to reduce injury to cow's feet (within 30m of dairy yard) such as wood chips, sawdust, limestone.

Downer cows

Provide feed, water, bedding and shelter for downer cows. If you do not have time to nurse, lift and regularly reassess, consider humane destruction.

Pasture Management

Assess feeding demands in the coming days/weeks - how long does your available pasture need to last?

Can you go to on-off grazing (2–4 hours on every 20–24 hours) to minimise pugging/overgrazing by establishing a sacrifice paddock.

Sacrifice paddocks need good shelter, should be well drained, are best positioned away from busy main roads and need to be an appropriate size for stocking rate.

Capital

Source immediate supplies of feed and animal health products.

Use your phone or digital cameras to take photos of any damage and/or water levels for insurance claims and to help your future planning.

Contact your Bank, landlord and business partners to let them know what has happened.

Other Resources

dairyaustralia.com.au

Search: extreme weather



Priorities list

Jobs	Task	Who is going to do it?	Who can help?	What resources are required?
Today				
This week				
This month				

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Dairy Australia Limited ABN 60 105 227 987
 Level 5, IBM Centre
 60 City Road, Southbank VIC 3006 Australia
 T + 61 3 9694 3777 F + 61 3 9694 3701
 E enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au
dairyaustralia.com.au

