



Support for rural people in the 2019 fires and drought

Rural Support Trusts work with Civil Defence, government and emergency services, supporting rural families through fire, drought, rains and recovery.

We support all rural people – owners, managers, families, staff, and contractors – in all rural agribusiness: dry stock, dairy, cropping, horticulture, forestry, poultry, and rural contracting.

Things can be a bit overwhelming after the fires and as we farm and work through drought.

It's normal to feel anxious about your safety, and that of your family and whanau, especially if you are living in an affected area. There are several places you can call for support, including your GP.

Your **local Rural Support Trust on 0800 787 254** can help connect you with professionals including farming or business advice, financial information, health, and counselling services.

Our services are free and confidential. We can talk over the phone or come to you.

The next few weeks

We are all watching the weather. As we are still in drought, continue to enact your feed budgets and stock planning. There is a good flyer from B+L NZ available on this.

If we get **heavy rain** forecast from coming storms, prepare for surface flooding and runoff due to the dry soils by moving stock and feed to safe, dry places.

Weather sites

- <https://www.niwa.co.nz/climate/information-and-resources/drought-monitor>
- <https://www.metservice.com/rural/nelson>

More information

- <https://www.facebook.com/nelsontasmancivildefenceandemergencymanagement>
- <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/adverse-events/dealing-with-drought-conditions/>
- <http://www.rural-support.org.nz/>
- <https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/extreme-dry-management-toolkit>

Important names and numbers

If life or property is at risk call 111.

Tasman District Council: 03 543 8400

Your vet:

Federated Farmers feedline: 0800 327 646

Forest Industry Contractors Assn: 0800 342 269

Nelson Central Police Station: 03 546 3840

Horticulture NZ: 04 472 3795

Beef + Lamb New Zealand: 04 473 9150

Your GP:

Help with livestock MPI: 0800 00 83 33 (option 4)

Free counsellors: 1737

Your local industry body:

0800 787 254
www.rural-support.org.nz



Your farm after the fires...

Safety: Make sure sheds and shelters are undamaged, or at least fit-for-purpose. Check trees.

Injuries: If you have had to leave your animals on your property, check them over carefully. Look at their hooves/pads/feet and udders in particular for injuries. If you think they may have sustained internal burns, or they seem to have difficulty breathing, call your vet right away.

Prevention: Remain prepared to re-evacuate until advised otherwise by Civil Defence.

Animal feed and water

- Give your animals access to clean water and priority feed the most vulnerable animals.
- Check any irrigation lines have not melted.
- Current evidence does not suggest any significant effects of fire suppressants on animals, but the chemicals in the suppressants do break down once they are in the soil. One of the breakdown products is nitrate. When it rains, pasture plants will take up nitrates just as they do after fertilisers containing nitrogen are applied. This can cause spikes in

nitrate levels in the plant material and high levels of nitrate can be toxic to livestock. If your property has fire retardant on it, refer to the animal welfare handout for details or talk to your vet.

Human food and water

- Fire suppressant may have left a pink or soapy residue on a few properties inside or near the perimeter of the fire. If fire suppressants have entered your water tanks – the water may taste salty and unpleasant. It is not suitable for humans or animals to drink.
- If your water is sourced from a roof, check and clean the roof and gutters of any ash or fire suppressant before using it. You may need to flush out your tank. Details on cleaning this are in the Nelson Marlborough Public Health flyer.

If food has defrosted: if in doubt, throw it out.

- Only food with ice crystals and intact packaging can be safely refrozen.
- You can use it if it's recently defrosted and stayed cold.
- If the food smells or appears weird, with a colour change or slimy texture, throw it out.

Looking after yourselves, your animals, and your property in dry conditions

- Regularly check the condition of your animals – they are your responsibility.
- If you have trouble looking after them or any concerns, seek help sooner rather than later.
- Keep an eye on climate predictions and soil moisture levels, especially on your own farm.
- Be aware of increased risk of fire and take precautions.
- Assess your stock's ongoing feed requirements and do a feed budget.
- Allow for a couple of weeks supplementary feed after it rains – to allow for pasture recovery.
- Assess water needs – work out how much your stock will drink and assess against your water allocation or supply. Allow for 60ml of water/kg liveweight per 24 hours. Stock may drink more water in hot conditions and when they are being fed supplementary feed.

Make a plan and set trigger points to make decisions or take action:

- Dates, stock condition, water restriction, feed availability.
- Ensure you all agree with the plan.
- When those points or times hit, do enact your plan.

- Consider destocking – either to another property or slaughter for stock animals.
- Prioritise what stock should be moved off first eg. capital stock vs fattening stock
- If you are sending animals to the works, book in space with plenty of time as there may be a backlog.
- Talk to your bank, accountants, vets, neighbours, MPI.
- Be kind to yourself, your family and your workers. Don't hesitate to ask for help.