



Animals affected by dry or drought conditions **livestock, horses, lifestyle block and small holdings**

This information is to help you look after your animals in dry or drought conditions.

When there is unusually low rainfall for a long time, the prolonged dry can become a drought. Water shortages can cause problems with pasture cover, stock condition and feed supply.

Water

Animals must have access to enough clean water daily. The below table shows the minimum water needs for different types of livestock in normal conditions.

In hot and dry conditions your animals might drink three times more water than usual, especially if they are eating dry feed like hay or pellets. They also need more water if they are working, pregnant or lactating.

Class of STOCK	WATER (litres/head/day)
Cattle	45
Sheep and goats	4
Deer (Red)	5
Horses	30
Alpacas	7
Pigs	20
Poultry	0.2

You need to have a plan for your animals in dry weather, and you are responsible for their welfare under the Animal Welfare Act. An essential part of your plan is monitoring water quantity and quality.

A reticulated water supply gives you the most control. Keep an eye out for signs of problems with the stockwater set up, such as stock milling around a trough, wet patches on dry ground, or patches of green grass when everywhere else is brown. During extreme dry conditions ground hardening can damage water systems, making irrigation connections and pipes leak, and wasting valuable water supplies.

Dry and drought conditions can affect water quality. When stockwater levels are low, the water temperature goes up, and flow is reduced, it creates an ideal environment for bacteria and algae to grow. Coastal areas have the extra risk of salt water getting into groundwater supply.

Stock don't like the taste of contaminated water so it increases the risks of dehydration, as well as toxicities and other illnesses. It's advised to test water through your local council to monitor water quality.

Low dams or ponds may be surrounded by mud or sludge. Fencing off these areas will prevent animals from getting trapped. If you cannot fence the areas, you should regularly check on your animals.

You need a plan for alternative stock water supply if you start to run low, or stock water becomes contaminated.

Keeping animals cool

Your animals need enough shade to stay cool and to reduce their need for extra water. If you don't have natural shade, look at ways you can use existing buildings, or create shade from other things.

Feed

You need to do feed planning to make sure your animals will have enough feed in coming months. If you leave it to later, there could be shortages to your normal feed supply.

Your stocking rate needs to be low enough that there is enough pasture to feed the number of animals on it. Overstocking means animals don't get all the nutrition they need and can cause animal welfare problems.



See full First Aid Kit checklist [here](#).



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Animals will need more feed depending on growth, pregnancy, lactation and weather conditions.

During dry times and drought, available pasture is often of poor quality and limited availability. You may need to bring in supplementary feed to maintain your animals, or make decisions to move your animals off the property.

The welfare of your animals is your highest priority when you are making these decisions.

It is usually more economical to sell stock than to buy-in feed. It may be possible to keep animals in a smaller area and supplementary feed (a sacrifice area) to reduce the impact of over-grazing, and help speed up pasture recovery when the drought is over.

Regularly monitor the condition of your animals with body condition scoring, and assess your pastures. Your pasture needs your attention to fuel your recovery after rain, as it will provide the main source of feed for your animals. Some paddocks may need to be re-sown. Using fertiliser and growth promotants at the right time can help with pasture recovery.

If you share water sources or grazing with another owner's animals, it's best to keep them apart from your stock and use biosecurity measures.

Minimise stress

Dry conditions and drought put animals under stress, which makes them more likely to get sick and lose condition.

Avoid putting any extra stress on animals by minimising mustering, yarding and transport, especially during the hotter parts of the day.

Parasite management is very important during dry times as animals have less natural resilience.

Support and assistance

If you are having problems with your animals during a drought, you can:

- Contact your veterinarian.
- Talk to your neighbours for advice or joining forces.
- Talk to a rural professional.

For animal welfare advice or assistance contact Ministry for Primary Industries on **0800 00 83 33**.

For farmer or lifestyle support, contact the Rural Support Trust on **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**.

DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb NZ can help with feed planning:

0800 BEEFLAMB (0800 233 352)

0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969)

Useful contacts

- Local Civil Defence Emergency Management office
www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group/
- DairyNZ
www.dairynz.co.nz/business/adverse-events/drought/
- Beef+LambNZ
<https://beeflambnz.com/news-views/topics/Drought>
- Federated Farmers
Phone **0800 FARMING (0800 327 646)**
- Local Animal Control – contact your local Council.

For more information about preparing and planning for your animals in an emergency, visit **www.mpi.govt.nz/animals-in-emergencies**

