



# FACT SHEET

FEBRUARY 2024

## MANAGING STRESSED STOCK

Stock can be stressed in many situations—adverse events being no exception. The level of stress inflicted by adversity is influenced by the condition of your livestock at the time of the event, including being pregnant, the time of year, and age of the stock.

Whatever the cause of the event, the priorities for stock management remain the same: water, feed, shelter and maintaining good health.

The table below summarises the key considerations and actions required to minimise stress in stock following or during an adverse event:

|                                 | Water  | Feed   | Shelter  | Health  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
|                                 | <b>Water is essential at all times</b>   | <b>Maintain a feed budget and update it as necessary</b>   | <b>Shelter can improve conditions for stock</b>  | <b>Health always needs to be monitored</b>  |
| <b>Drought/<br/>Extreme Dry</b> | Check troughs daily, especially in hot, windy conditions   | Create a feed budget, preparing for the worst. Plan to continue supplemental feeding even after the dry breaks while pastures recover                | Offer shade from the sun, especially in hot, windy conditions  | Introduce any supplemental feed gradually to prevent acidosis in the rumen  |
| <b>Flood</b>                    | Secure access to clean water   | Move stock to higher ground. Avoid standing stock in small spaces for too long to prevent pasture becoming muddy. Avoid feeding slimy, rotting grass | Stock lose body temperature when wet. Move stock nearer to shelter (such as trees), where wind speed can be reduced by up to 90% | Monitor pasture quality for excess silt. Small silt particles digested during feeding can cause ketosis and scouring                              |
| <b>Volcanic eruption</b>        | Drain and clean troughs contaminated by ash or silt as it poisonous to stock                           | Limit pasture feeding until it rains as pasture may be toxic due to increased ash/silt. Introduce/increase supplements                               | Shelter belts can catch and filter some of the ash or silt. This can help reduce respiratory problems                            | Monitor for respiratory problems and reduced appetite. Increased ash can reduce feed palatability. Sulphur dioxide also increases pasture acidity |
| <b>Frost and snow</b>           | Check troughs daily and break any ice covers. If feeding supplements, water requirements will increase | Increase feed levels when stock are cold to prevent weight loss  | Provide protection from harsh winter conditions, particularly heavy snow   | Don't forget your normal vaccination programme or mineral supplementation   |

## RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF STRESS

Stock react to stress differently, with signs of stress developing immediately or over a period of time. Signs of stress include a lone animal wandering away from other stock, being lethargic, losing condition, running up and down fence lines and not eating or drinking.

If a stressful weather event is forecast, or is a seasonal event, prepare your stock in advance. Make sure sheep and cattle have access to the correct amount and type of feed and are not deficient in trace elements. This will ensure your stock are well prepared for the event. For more information see [trace element nutrition of sheep](#) and [energy requirements of cattle](#).

## HANDLING STRESSED ANIMALS

Stressed animals are difficult and unpredictable. Worksafe New Zealand has compiled good practice guidelines that may help you understand any unfamiliar behaviour and avoid injury to yourself or your employees.

Go to [www.business.govt.nz/worksafe](http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe) or call Worksafe on 0800 030 040.

## CHANGING FEEDS

When animals are caught in an adverse event and pasture availability is limited, stock become hungry with a tendency to overeat when feed is made available. Introduce feed gradually and in limited amounts to reduce the risk of acidosis. For more information on acidosis, see [rumen acidosis](#).

## GENERAL MAINTENANCE

After an adverse event electricity and water supply may be disrupted. Check pumps, pipes, power lines and other items supplying stock. Keep an eye out for hazards.

## CONTACTS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Rural support Trust | 0800 787 254   |
| MPI                 | 0800 00 83 33  |
| Federated Farmers   | 0800 327 646   |
| Vet Association     | <a href="http://www.nzva.org.nz">www.nzva.org.nz</a>                   |
| DairyNZ             | 0800 4 DairyNZ   |
| Civil defence       | <a href="http://www.civildefence.govt.nz">www.civildefence.govt.nz</a> |
| NAIT                | 0800 62 48 43  |

## FURTHER SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

Don't forget your local farm suppliers, vets, consultants and bankers are also useful contacts. They have the best local knowledge and ideas to try and help you through these tough times.

### RESOURCES

[A guide to feed planning for sheep farmers](#)

[Condition scoring for beef cows](#)

[Ewe body condition scoring](#)

[Pasture growth forecaster](#)

[B+LNZ knowledge hub—feed fundamentals](#)

[B+LNZ knowledge hub—principles of feeding: from lambing to weaning](#)

[B+LNZ knowledge-hub—principles of feeding: growing and grazing pasture](#)

[B+LNZ knowledge hub—principles of feeding: from mating to lambing \(sheep\)](#)

[B+LNZ knowledge hub: principles of feeding: from weaning to mating \(sheep\)](#)

To find more resources from B+LNZ please visit [www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com)

### B+LNZ WORKSHOPS

Please contact your local extension manager for more information on the following workshops: Sheep Body Condition Scoring, Beef Body Condition Scoring, Feed Budgeting, Better Sheep Breeding, Better Beef Breeding.

These workshops are free to beef and sheep farmers and will help with making more informed and economical decisions. You can find your local extension manager on our website at [www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com). or by calling 0800 BEEFLAMB (0800 233 352) or email [enquiries@beeflambnz.com](mailto:enquiries@beeflambnz.com).



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