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20 May 2025

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DairyNZ submission on strengthening New Zealand's emergency management legislation

1. DairyNZ appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on strengthening New Zealand's emergency management legislation.
2. We have identified three areas that would strengthen New Zealand's emergency management legislation:
 - I. Consideration of animal welfare needs in emergency management.
 - II. The need for rural representation in planning and emergency responses.
 - III. Opportunities to hold and share up-to-date information to aid coordination of emergency responses, including biosecurity.
3. DairyNZ is the industry good organisation that represents all New Zealand dairy farmers. DairyNZ is focused on helping farmers build profitable, sustainable, and resilient farm businesses through extension, advocacy, science and research. Our purpose is to progress a positive future for New Zealand dairy farming.
4. DairyNZ is funded by a levy on milksolids that is paid by all dairy farmers under the Commodity Levies Act 1990, a significant proportion of our work is allocated towards extension and support for dairy farmers, animal care and biosecurity.
5. Human wellbeing and the welfare of livestock in rural New Zealand are uniquely impacted by adverse events, and farmers should be recognised and considered during adverse events planning and in emergency response decision-making.
6. DairyNZ is submitting on this consultation to highlight the importance of animal welfare, rural community needs, information sharing, and clear roles and responsibilities to support the emergency management system.



Animal welfare needs in emergency management

8. DairyNZ is progressing a positive future for New Zealand dairy farming, with animal care at the heart of a sustainable and competitive dairy sector. New Zealand dairy farmers provide a high standard of animal care by global standards. However, our pasture-based farm systems are vulnerable to climatic extremes and adverse weather events, which can negatively impact human wellbeing, animal welfare and business viability.
9. During the response to Cyclone Gabrielle, animal welfare concerns were not sufficiently prioritised, which resulted in confusion, lack of direction among support agencies, and negative impacts on farmers and their animals.
10. It has become evident from the response to Cyclone Gabrielle that the **integration of animals into the emergency management system must be enhanced**.
11. For example, in the early stages of the Cyclone Gabrielle response, Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) did not accept animal feed and supplies from veterinary clinics as critical supplies for isolated communities. This included CDEM refusing requests from veterinarians to deliver dry cow therapy to dairy farmers. Dry cow therapy is an important tool to help prevent negative welfare outcomes due to mastitis when cows stop being milked.
12. To successfully support farmers and their livestock with readiness planning, response and recovery, an understanding of farming and rural communities is required.
13. It is encouraging to see that the discussion document places a greater emphasis on the consideration of animal welfare needs during and after emergencies. **DairyNZ is supportive of strengthening planning expectations, requiring CDEM Group plans to consider animal welfare needs as part of response and recovery planning in their areas (Issue 10.2, Option 2).**
14. Animal welfare needs can also be better met if lifeline utilities and road access can enable business continuity soon after an adverse event, for example, power to resume milking and tanker access to pick up milk. DairyNZ supports greater assurance of lifeline utilities' business continuity plans, with monitoring of preparedness of lifeline utilities for adverse events **(Issue 11.2, Option 2).**

Rural representation in planning and emergency responses

15. Approximately 1 in 5 New Zealanders live in rural areas, with about 90% of the country's land area considered 'rural'. Thriving rural communities are essential to meeting the Government's ambition to double the value of exports over the next 10 years, as the primary industries produce more than 80% of New Zealand's trade exports.¹
16. It is therefore disappointing to see little reference to rural communities and consideration of rural community needs in the discussion document (only one reference). However, we acknowledge the discussion document recognises that the emergency management system needs to do more to meet the increasingly diverse needs in New Zealand's communities.
17. **DairyNZ is supportive of strengthening the emergency management system to meet the diverse needs of communities**, specifically requiring CDEM to identify the diverse needs of those in their area, and to engage with those within the community to inform CDEM Group plans **(Issue 1, Option 3).**

¹ Information sourced from: <https://htrhn.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rural-Snapshot-2024-HT-FINAL-Spread-Updated.pdf>



18. **Rural representation is needed at all levels of an emergency response (local, regional and national), and across the 4 Rs (reduction, readiness, response, and recovery).** This includes the role of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) as a lead agency (e.g. for rural drought) or as a support agency to provide consideration of rural, primary industry and animal welfare needs, as well as involvement and coordination of Rural Advisory Groups (RAG), Rural Support Trust (RST), Federated Farmers, the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) and industry groups like DairyNZ, to help identify needs on-farm and in rural communities.
19. **Farmers also need to be provided information to manage risks to their farms, staff and animals in a timely manner.** This information needs to be relevant, regionally specific, seasonally specific and tailored to farm systems. There have been instances where information has been shared that is not relevant, either regionally or seasonally (e.g., information relating to dry cows when many farms are still milking). For past emergency responses, DairyNZ has been able to offer regionally specific farm systems information and communications to support impacted farmers, ensuring the messaging is appropriate and fit for purpose.
20. Clarification of roles and responsibilities of those involved in providing a rural and farming perspective at the national, regional and local levels would help facilitate better coordination of resources and messaging to those impacted and would help reduce the duplication of activities during an emergency response.
21. It is also important for CDEM Groups (through Regional Council input) to issue clear guidance on how issues are to be managed during and after an adverse event in relation to requirements under the Resource Management Act 1991, for example, discharge of dairy effluent, disposal of milk and disposal of dead livestock. This would help ensure farmers take appropriate action to manage both risks to human health and the environment.
22. DairyNZ has no preference for the proposed options to address how to provide for clear responsibilities and accountabilities at the national, regional, and local levels in legislation outlined in the discussion document (**Issues 5, 6 and 7**), many of the issues DairyNZ has experienced would benefit from improved operational planning.
23. **Strengthening and enabling community participation in emergency management is crucial in rural areas.** Rural businesses may be able to provide resources to aid response efforts, such as vehicles or machinery. DairyNZ is supportive of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) producing guidance on how to form arrangements and processes for offers of resources from the community, or to require CDEM Group plans to state how offers of resources from the community would be managed (**Issue 3, Option 2 or 3**).

Information to aid the coordination of emergency responses

24. As part of emergency response efforts, DairyNZ has leveraged up-to-date information within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to contact impacted dairy farmers to deliver key messaging and to gather intel to build a picture of the issues 'on the ground'.
25. However, there have been instances where dairy farmers were contacted multiple times by different groups in the early stages of an emergency response due to a lack of coordination, and an inability to share information due to there not being appropriate systems in place and concerns for privacy.
26. **DairyNZ is supportive of strengthening information sharing to support coordinated emergency responses, with appropriate protections for privacy,** through the development of standards and guidance for establishing information sharing agreements (**Issue 11.3, Option 2**).



27. There may be opportunities to integrate existing information systems or share data to ensure contact details are up-to-date, response activities can be coordinated, and appropriate privacy protections are in place. This may have benefits that go beyond the purposes of emergency management legislation (e.g., for biosecurity responses or emergencies under the Biosecurity Act 1993).

Next steps

DairyNZ welcomes the opportunity to discuss these topics further, if you have any questions on the feedback provided in this submission, please get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Lincoln

Head of Policy

Farm Solutions and Policy, DairyNZ