Dairynz

Extreme Weather:

On-Farm Recovery Tips

These practical steps will help you return to normal milking, maintain cow health, and support successful mating after extreme weather challenges.

Return to your normal milking frequency

Cows will generally adjust to a return to routine milking frequency with minimal impact on production. While short-term spikes in somatic cell count (SCC) are likely; these should settle within 2–5 days once normal milking resumes.

However, new cases of clinical mastitis will occur.

Management suggestions:

- Ensure cows are fully milked out at every milking. Where possible, have someone monitor cups-off.
- Check that teat spraying is operating correctly. Consider reverting to manual teat spray to ensure complete coverage.
- Closely monitor for new cases of clinical mastitis risk and follow proper hygiene and treatment protocols.
- Track SCC levels and consult your milk processor and vet if levels remain elevated or breach grading thresholds.

Mating

A sharp drop in dry matter intake (DMI) at the start of mating is likely to affect both reproduction and milk production. However, research shows this can return to normal after six weeks of restored DMI. Additional trace element supplementation (Selenium, Cobalt, Copper) may be required, especially if feed has changed significantly. Pushing back the start of mating by a limited period of time will not have a significant impact on next season's milking production.

Management options:

- If relying on heat detection technology and facing power or Wi-Fi issues, use tail paint as a backup.
- Identify non-cycling cows early and discuss treatment options with your vet.
- Consider using compact calving and short gestation semen in weeks 3–6 to tighten next season's calving spread, and/ or extend mating slightly with short gestation semen in the final weeks.
- Prioritize body condition score, particularly where there has been significant impact on feeding, water supply, milking, and mineral supplementation. Where possible offer lighter cows preferential feeding options.

Animal health

Some cows may have missed mineral supplementation for several days, but long-term impact is likely to be minimal. Lack of magnesium or calcium may affect recently calved cows and milkers short-term, but long-term effects are unlikely. Where diets have been restricted, restoring energy balance is crucial to minimise health issues. Be aware of a higher risk of down cows. Restoring feeding levels will help cows return to normal routine and overcome the stress of the event.

There may be an increased percentage of lameness, particularly if cows have had to walk longer distances to alternative milking facilities.

Management options:

- Ensuring cows return to a pre-event level of feeding (where practicable).
- Resume mineral and magnesium supplementation as soon as possible.
- Supplement trace elements (Selenium, Cobalt, Copper) if feed has changed significantly or if local deficiencies exist - consult your vet.
- If water-based supplementation isn't possible, consider magnesium oxide dusting or adding magnesium slurries to feed. Lime flour can be used for high-risk cows.
- Be aware of an increased risk of down cows and lameness. Monitor and treat appropriately.

For more support and detailed guidance on **environmental management, insurance, wellbeing, and financial recovery after extreme weather, visit dairynz/adverse-events.** You'll find practical information on meeting environmental requirements, looking after yourself and your team, managing finances, and navigating insurance claims.

Reach out to your local Area Manager at dairynz/regional-teams - we're here to help.

More info availble at dairynz/adverse-events