

MANAGING OUTBLOCKS AND REMOTE STOCK

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If a farm has a reduced workforce due to the spread of COVID-19, the following questions may arise when managing stock based remotely on out-blocks or run-off areas:

How important is improved communication?

Working with reduced staffing levels, or alone on smaller farms, poses a greater health and safety risk in the event something goes wrong. Have a clear communication plan so that other farm staff or family members are fully aware if you are working at an isolated out-block. This is to ensure any emergency can be communicated and responded to immediately.

What should I do if working alone in a remote location?

If you choose to work alone as a COVID-19 prevention measure, be sure to maintain regular and scheduled contact with your family or team members when in remote areas. If more than one person is necessary to do the task, don't travel in the same vehicle and remember to maintain physical distance of at least 1.5m from your colleague(s) at all times.

What resources and items are needed for working remotely?

Ensure you bring your fully charged mobile phone, a first aid kit, your own PPE/boots and disinfectant. This is so you are prepared for emergencies that may arise and can follow COVID-19 hygiene requirements. This means hands can be washed or sanitised regularly and shared high touch surfaces can be disinfected between use at the site.

Can out-blocks/run-off areas be managed differently during a COVID-19 outbreak?

For larger farm teams, consider splitting into smaller teams and having a dedicated person or persons that look after any out-blocks and do not mix with other farm staff for the duration of the Government COVID-19 control period. This will minimise risk of contact and spread between farm

team members. This could also be a high-risk category person (60+ yrs. or pre-existing medical conditions) to minimise their exposure during normal work tasks.

What about working with animals in out-blocks?

Consider postponing any work where a person is alone with stock, especially in yards, as this introduces other risks. Stock handling facilities on run off blocks are often inferior to facilities around the main dairy yard. Be mindful of this if moving stock and avoid any non-essential yarding.

What should be considered if operating machinery remotely?

There are risks associated with machinery operation in remote areas. Ensure your mobile phone is charged if spending several hours at a run-off block. Also ensure a farm team member is aware of your work location and estimated time needed to complete the job. There are Smartphone Apps such as Find My Friends or Google Maps available that can keep people informed of your location. If there is no mobile phone coverage in the area establish an alternative means of communication prior to commencing the job.

Can machinery-related tasks be simplified on an out-block?

If possible, have a dedicated tractor/feed out cart at the out-block so you are not bringing potentially contaminated equipment between locations.

What precautions should I take with machinery and equipment to prevent COVID-19 spread?

Disinfect any door handles, steering wheel, controls and common (high) touch points of shared machinery particularly between use by any other person. COVID-19 can remain on surfaces for 72+ hours in the right conditions. The same will also apply to all other farm equipment such as tools, quad bikes/side-by-sides/calf feeders/buckets etc. See the COVID-19

Guidelines for Milk Collection or Disinfectant for use on dairy farms during COVID-19 factsheet for more details.

How should I deal with contractors working on out-blocks?

Many farmers will be planning to sow seed on run-off blocks this autumn which might involve having contractors on-farm. Plan to keep distant from any contractors arriving on farm. If the contractor is a regular farm visitor and familiar with the layout, it should be possible to eliminate

direct contact with any farm staff. Where possible, email maps or photos concerning the job location.

How can feeding out of stock in out-blocks be co-ordinated?

If feeding out fodder or concentrates to stock in remote areas in the coming weeks, try co-ordinating feed location to simplify the task. Provide a ration that is low risk for rumen disfunction, and adequate in energy and protein requirements to minimise the likelihood of cattle health issues.