

MISSED MILKINGS DUE TO ADVERSE EVENTS

Adverse events resulting in a power outage can affect the ability to operate the dairy and milk the herd. In some instances (e.g. bushfire, flooding), lack of power affecting milking operations can last for days.

Cows are able to cope relatively well with one, or two, missed milkings. Research from New Zealand has shown that delays of up to a week can potentially be tolerated but this is dependent on the stage of lactation for individual cows. For early to early-mid lactation cows, missing more than 48 hours plus of milking can negatively affect whole of lactation milk production.

Steps to assist recovery while milking cannot be undertaken

The same adverse event affecting power supply and milking may also have flow on effects to water and feed allocation. Despite the challenges, it is important for farms to maintain dry matter intake with quality feed, if at all possible. Where water and feed intake, or quality, are restricted quarters may limit production. Missed milkings will exacerbate this process potentially leading to a lactation which cannot be recovered for individual cows.

Steps to recovery once the dairy is operational

- Where possible, attempt to re-establish the normal milking pattern (eg twice a day). If this is not possible, once a day milking or three milkings across 48 hours is the preferred option
- The normal milking routine may be challenging to undertake but try to ensure that quarters are milked out and teat disinfection is applied ensuring adequate volume and coverage (20 mls per cow per milking with all parts of the teat barrel covered)

- An increase in clinical mastitis cases is typically seen in quarters not milked for 36–48 hours or more – where possible introduce pre-cups on stripping to optimise your clinical mastitis surveillance.
- Cows detected with clinical mastitis should be treated according to the farm protocol. Milking them in a separate group, and last in the milking order, is ideal if this can be achieved. Cows that are systemically sick as a result of clinical mastitis should be treated according to your veterinarian's recommendations and this may involve parenteral and supportive therapies.
- Elevated bulk milk cell counts (BMCC) can be expected in the days and weeks following missed milkings and is generally as a result of increased sub-clinical mastitis or clinical mastitis cases that have gone undetected. If the BMCC does not decrease in the weeks following resumption of normal milking patterns consult your veterinarian or milk quality adviser for follow up actions.

Steps if harvested milk cannot be collected

- Consult your processor on their recommendations for milk that cannot be picked up and needs to be dumped
- Take extreme care if dumped milk is going to end up in the dairy effluent system as more than one or two days of milk can significantly increase organic load in an effluent pond
- Milk can potentially be diluted with water (10:1) and applied to land but check for the potential for run off and entry into watercourses which must be avoided. Check with your State Department of Agriculture prior to this action

Links

- [Milking through power outages factsheet](#)
- [Mastitis control in wet conditions factsheet](#)