

Prepare for flood

Floods can be unpredictable and destructive. They can isolate you from your community, damage infrastructure, cut essential services, cause death or injuries and result in costly dumped milk.

Being ready with a contingency plan will save time and help you keep the dairy operational. Forward planning, a team approach and practice are the key steps to minimise disruption to your business. Recovery from any natural disaster can be slow, stressful and costly so it is worth spending time at least once a year to discuss areas of business risk with family and employees.

1. Talk risk

Share flood experiences with staff and younger family members and maintain contact with neighbours, the local community and council representatives – what knowledge do you need or can you share with others?

Does everyone know how and where a flood can threaten personal safety and the business?

What are the warning signs/river gauge heights needed to trigger your response plan?

How will you hear about flood alerts and warnings?

Can you mark or record physical hazards as a reminder to staff, tanker drivers and visitors?

2. Plan ahead

Do you know who to ask for help to design new flood-proof infrastructure investments e.g. feed pads, laneways and effluent systems?

Could you volunteer to help local dairy farm or community flood readiness activities? e.g. coordinating local text/SMS alerts.

Does everyone know what to do if livestock need to be moved off the farm and/or to higher ground?

Who will move the cattle, open gates and retrieve pumps from waterways?

Which refuge area (mound or paddock) will be used to keep stock safe?

Are all fodder reserves/supplementary feeds stored together? Can they be stored separately to reduce risk and how easily can they be moved to the higher ground, as/when necessary?

Will stock be able to access drinking water during a flood?

3. Prepare Just in case

Write down an inventory of your main assets – can you store photos or receipts in one, safe place?

Have you studied the details in your insurance policies – what evidence is required for a flood claim?

What plans are in place so you can milk during a power outage

Do you maintain sufficient fuel reserves so you're ready to run pumps and/or generators?

Can you minimise the risk of structural damage e.g. keep your gutters clean, maintain roof attachments, tidy yards of rubbish?

Do you have an emergency kit ready including mobile phone charger, key documents and insurance papers?

4. Respond and act

When warnings are issued make sure to monitor SES, ABC and other local news sources – are you familiar with the official websites and information available?

How will you make contact with any local flood wardens, your milk company, your staff and family members?

Think about ongoing communications – is your phone charged, your contact list up to date and do you have back-up for your computer?

Focus on priority tasks e.g. remove pumps from fast flowing creeks, move vehicles and farm equipment to higher ground, make sure fodder is accessible and away from flood prone areas.

Remember to look after yourself, your livestock and your assets – protect people, property and profit.