

Drought 2020



Getting through the 2020 drought

We know that this year's persistent and severe drought combined with Covid-19 pressures, is having a major impact on farmers.

The lead agency for the drought response is the Hawke's Bay Rural Advisory Group, who work in partnership with Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, Hawke's Bay Regional Council, East Coast Rural Support Trust, councillors, Ministry for Primary Industries, Federated Farmers, NZ Fire Service, Beef and Lamb NZ, and Silver Fern Farms.

Eight RAG satellite teams covering feed, water, logistics, animal welfare, mental wellbeing and finance are supporting the vital work of the East Coast Rural Support Trust.

We have a Maori Liason team and another team linking in with the Wairoa Civil Defence Emergency Management team.

Message from RAG co-chair Lochie MacGillivray

It goes without saying that those of us in the rural community of Hawke's Bay are facing the toughest drought conditions we have ever experienced.

We are hardy, resilient people, who have experienced droughts before yet, with seven consecutive months of very little rain, this one seems unrelenting, made more difficult with COVID-19 restrictions as well as drought conditions in other regions reducing our options.

The RAG is made up of people who know exactly what it's like to farm in these conditions, know how to rebuild your business and are focused on delivering specialist farm support to those who need it.

While this situation is tough, and intense, there are things you can do to lift your spirits and ensure your farm comes through this in the best shape possible.

Developing a plan gives a sense of security. Talk to your trusted advisers, a problem shared feels like one halved.

Tap in to the free support and advice of the Rural Support Trust, and our satellite teams who are on the ground supporting farmers 1:1.

It's incredibly easy to burn out during these times, so take time away from farm work. Start a project or whatever you can to take your mind off the farm, even though it may be brief.

Over the next few weeks we will share our stories of farming in droughts, and ask people to share their experiences. Each drought is different, but in sharing our collective experiences, common themes for getting through will become apparent.

Please support your friends and neighbours, and by doing so, we can make our community stronger and more resilient.



The East Coast Rural Support Trust

The East Coast Rural Support Trust is a charitable organisation of rural people with a wide range of experience and knowledge in dealing with severe drought.

If you need support, call 0800 787 254, and you can speak with a representative from the Trust, and your call will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

For comprehensive up-to-date national and local information and advice about the drought go to the Regional Council's drought hub <https://www.hbrc.govt.nz/environment/farmers-hub/drought-crisis-hub/>

There has been below normal monthly rainfall in the Ruahine Ranges, Heretaunga and Ruataniwha Plains and southern Hawke's Bay for six consecutive months. The Regional Council is regularly monitoring soil moisture, which is currently well below normal. To 'break' the drought, the region requires about 60-80mm of rain over two weeks.

Top tips

1. Keep developing a plan
2. Order feed now
3. Reach out for support

Feed Advice

Hawke's Bay is experiencing feed shortages, exacerbated by a reduction in processing capacity as a result of the new protocols that processing companies have to follow in order to operate during the Covid-19 lockdown.

We urge farmers to order supplementary feed now, given it can take 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Are you a farmer or lifestyle block owner with livestock? Do you need help planning your animals feed?

Use the free feed planning service. Call either:

Beef + Lamb 0800 BEEFLAMB (0800 233 352)

Dairy NZ 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969)

or if you are not strictly drystock or dairy try 0508 AGFIRST

Nitrogen use

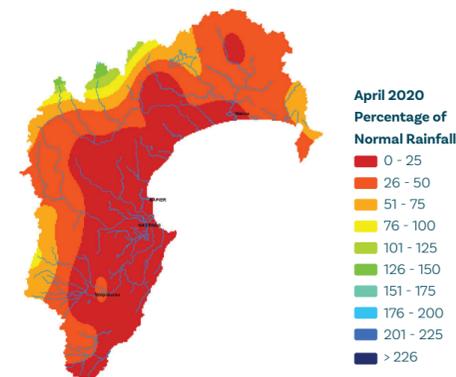
Beef + Lamb say that the nitrogen fertiliser is worth considering as a short-term tactical response, when in recovery mode. After a period of dry, there is some release of nitrogen in the soil, but a small amount of nitrogen fertiliser (25-30kgN/ha) applied to growing grass with adequate soil moisture - ideally immediately before rain - will boost growth.

Some dairy farmers may be concerned about how adding extra nitrogen fertiliser will impact their resource consents in the Tukituki catchment.

Given every farm system is different, the Regional Council is encouraging farmers to seek advice from their farm consultant/adviser, milk supply company or accredited farm plan provider as to how any changes proposed to their system for drought recovery may affect their nitrogen leaching. Any changes to the farm system must be recorded in your farm's year end nutrient budget.

Water

Contact water suppliers to book in deliveries. Some carriers will deliver non-potable water for stock.



For those who have consented irrigation water takes, the water can be used for stock and domestic use, however please talk to the regional council before doing this so we can understand where the water is being used.

Finance

Talk to your bank and accountant, and talk to them regularly.

If you need help with planning and budgeting for your farm, the Rural Support Trust can point you in the right direction.

Animal welfare

MPI is helping to co-ordinate animal welfare services if needed for affected animals or their owners.

If you have any questions about animal welfare, email animal.welfare@mpi.govt.nz

For a contact list of local animal welfare contacts, go to the Regional Council drought hub.

Mental wellbeing

It's understandable to be stressed given the pressures from the drought, combined with the lock down restrictions.

It's ok, to not be ok.

If you need further support, don't hesitate to call or text 1737, at any time 24/7 to speak with a trained counsellor.

A message from Hawke's Bay Civil Defence

We understand that farmers are facing a severe drought and pressures from COVID-19.

We wanted to offer our support to families and communities impacted by the drought.

We'll continue to support the efforts of the Rural Advisory Group and the vital work they are doing.

For urgent welfare support, call 0800 HBAYCD (0800 422 923).

Profile: Ponty Von Dadelszen

Ponty runs a 80 hectare beef and sheep farm (in conjunction with 1000 hectares in the Flemington district), just outside of Waipukurau.

In the past three months, just 30mm of rain fell resulting in no grass growth, and an outlay of \$20,000 on feed on just his 80 ha farm alone.

The sale yards are shut down, and meat works are operating at 50% capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"In past droughts, there are normally relief tools you can lever, such as moving stock to the western areas of the country for grazing, but this is unprecedented territory," he says.

Ponty expects that it will take up to two years to recover from the losses sustained during this drought.

"We've just got to box on and do what we can."

