



with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
and the Ministry of Social Development

Fact sheet

Adverse Events and Stress

This fact sheet is intended as a guide only. It covers some signs of stress and suggests ways to help you and your family cope.

It's said that a little stress is actually good as it motivates us to action, however, if stress levels increase too much it affects our ability to cope. If you are at all concerned, seek advice from a medical professional.

During times of stress it's a normal reaction for some people to withdraw from other people. However rural communities are known for their strength and research shows in times of crisis that support community members give each other is crucial.

As well as putting in place plans for yourself and your family, the support that members of local communities can give each other is a major factor in getting through.

Common signs of stress

Everyone responds differently to stress and it is not always obvious to the person or those around them that stress levels are increasing. Here are some symptoms of stress:

Body	Thoughts	Feelings	Behaviour
Headaches	Difficulty concentrating	Anger	Neglect of children
Backaches	Forgetfulness	Irritability	Neglect of stock
Tightness in the chest	Worrying	Short fuse	Increased use of alcohol or drugs
Fatigue	Thoughts of death	Anxiety	Increased caffeine use
Stomach cramps	Poor attention to detail	Depression	Excessive smoking
Difficulty breathing	Perfectionist tendencies	Poor self-esteem	Aggressive behaviour
Diarrhoea	Difficulty in making decisions	Moodiness	Overeating
Loss of sexual interest	Feeling helpless	Suspiciousness	Eating less
Insomnia	Catastrophising (blowing things out of proportion)	Guilt	Relationship conflict
Skin problems	Avoidance or denial	Crying	Communication difficulties
Weakened immune system	Blaming yourself or others	Loss of motivation	Decreased activity
Weight gain or loss		Sadness	Withdrawing from people
		Helplessness	Neglect of physical appearance
		Hopelessness	
		Shame	

What can I do to reduce stress?

Many techniques to reduce stress are common sense.

- Get a good night's sleep
- Eat a healthy diet
- Recreational exercise
- Do something you enjoy at least once every day
- Use alcohol in moderation
- Use caffeine in moderation
- Set yourself realistic goals
- Make sure you've got something to look forward to
- Talk to someone you trust
- Keep in contact with friends and family
- Take a break and get together with others. If you can't spare a whole day even an hour or two of socialising can really help
- Talk to your neighbour- they may have similar problems to you
- Don't be afraid to accept help. It will make it easier for other people to accept help from you
- Maintain routines
- From time to time do something completely different
- Still try to have fun- even if you don't feel like it
- Be kind to yourself
- Make a plan to manage the underlying issues
- Help your memory by making lists

How can I keep my family strong during stressful times?

- A drought is a stressful event which will affect the whole family in different ways
- Here are some tips to help your family get through tough times:
- Spend quality time together as a couple and try to understand each others concerns
- Listen to each other until you have experienced the other persons side of the issue
- Don't blame each other
- Recognise problems and put strategies in place for managing them
- Discuss concerns openly.
- Try not to raise your voice or exaggerate
- If a discussion becomes tense take time out until emotions have calmed
- Express affection verbally, physically and practically
- Accept each other and give moral support
- Try and have fun as a family
- Keep family routines e.g. meals together
- Celebrate even small achievements e.g. a higher grade at school for your child
- Celebrate birthdays and other significant events
- Focus on the present and try not to revisit the past
- Try to avoid body language which could be seen as aggressive e.g. rolling your eyes or clenching your fists.
- Keep linked to your community and have social gatherings

How can I support my children and teenagers through tough times?

- Children are sensitive to their parents' moods and reactions. Even if nothing has been said, children pick up that their parents are stressed. If they don't know what is happening they tend to think the worst and blame themselves.
- It is important to give children some age-appropriate information to help them understand what is happening.
- Talk to your child if you are concerned about changes in their mood, behaviour, friendships, sleeping, eating patterns or school performance. If you are still concerned, talk to the school, and seek professional help.

- Some guidelines for helping your children are-
- Spend time with them
- Give your children a simple explanation of the problem and tell them about any potential ways of managing it.
- Involve them as far as possible in decision-making depending on their age
- If decisions are made explain to your children what will be different and what will remain the same
- Explain your child's responsibility is to focus on doing well at school and helping at home and your responsibility is to look after the farm
- Have family meetings
- Have fun family times

The importance of community support

- Social interaction is a key way to reducing feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety. Some ideas are-
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- Keep neighbourhood support groups active
- Have picnics
- Have barbeques
- Baby sit for each other
- Have film evenings at home
- Have coffee with friends
- Do an act of kindness for someone else-small things make a big difference
- Start or join a club or recreational group

HELP

For further assistance, the following organisations can be contacted

All of the organisations below have regional representatives who can help. All calls are treated in confidence.

Rural Women New Zealand - 0800 256 467

Federated Farmers – 0800 FEDFARM

Rural Support Trust

Rural Support Trusts provide assistance to the rural community in times of hardship, including during adverse events such as drought and floods. Rural Support Trusts can provide services such as: coordinating an initial response to an event, helping farmers decide on business options, acting as advocates for financial assistance, and providing stress management services (or making referrals if appropriate).

Victim Support – 0800 842 846

Victim Support has local qualified and experienced counsellors available who can travel to your farm to meet you at no cost. For a list of counsellors in your area please call them on their toll free number.

Personal contacts

Use this box to write down any of your own contacts you may find helpful (e.g., school, friends, neighbours.)

Name/Organisation	Contact details

Rural Support Trusts

Region	Trust	Phone	Contact / Email
Northland	Northland Rural Support Trust	021 354 605	Helen Moodie Helen.moodie@landcare.org.nz
Waikato/Hauraki /Coromandel	Waikato/Hauraki/Coromandel Rural Relief Trust	0800 787 254	Neil Bateup bateupn@xtra.co.nz
Bay of Plenty	Bay of Plenty Rural Support Trust	07 533 3764	Derek Spratt Spratty@netsmart.co.nz
Gisborne	East Coast Rural Support Trust (Gisborne)	06 868 4840	David Scott treescapfarm@xtra.co.nz
Hawke's Bay	East Coast Rural Support Trust (Hawke's Bay)	06 877 3930 027 582 8443	Mike Barham md.ee.barham@xtra.co.nz
		06 858 6780 027 597 5839	Tom Goodger tgooder@pggwrightson.co.nz
Manawatu/Rangitikei/Wanganui	Manawatu/Rangitikei Family Support Trust	021 329 977	Margaret Millard millard@manawatu.gen.nz
Tararua	East Coast Rural Support Trust (Dannevirke)	06 374 9862	Chris Southgate cwsouthgate@xtra.co.nz
Taranaki	Taranaki Rural Support Trust	06 751 4217	Peter Adamski pkadamski@orcon.net.nz
Wairarapa	East Coast Rural Support Trust (Masterton)	06 378 6895	Bruce Watkins hmebw@xtra.co.nz
Marlborough/Nelson/Tasman	Top of the South Trust	03 578 9923	Ian Blair ieblair@xtra.co.nz
West Coast	West Coast Rural Trust	03 738 0038	Dianne Milne bobmilne@xtra.co.nz
		03 768 9000	Ross Bishop rossbishop@xtra.co.nz
North Canterbury	North Canterbury Rural Support Trust	03 318 1742	Dorothy Oakley spudfarm@xtra.co.nz
Mid Canterbury	Mid-Canterbury Emergency Relief Trust	03 308 7594	Alan Baird allan.baird@xtra.co.nz
South Canterbury	South Canterbury Adverse Event Trust	03 612 6367	David Hewson hewson@farmside.co.nz
Otago	Otago Adverse Events Trust	03 454 6198	Irene Scurr scurbiko@xtra.co.nz
		03 434 0459	Bev McCaw beverlymccaw@slingshot.co.nz
Southland	Southland Rural Support Trust	027 431 8173	Russell Falconer Russell.f@sld.quik.co.nz