



# Looking after yourself during tough times

## Practical ways dairy farmers can reduce pressure on themselves

When costs rise and conditions are uncertain, it's easy to think about what is going wrong. Looking after yourself is not about pretending things are fine. It's about doing small practical things that help you stay steady, think clearly, stay safe and make better decisions. Farmer-specific wellbeing resources from the **National Centre for Farmer Health** and **iFarmWell** both focus on practical coping, small actions and early support.

### Focus on what you can control

Some things are out of your hands, such as prices, supply and the season. Put your energy into the things you can influence today:

- the jobs that matter most
- what spending can wait
- how you plan the day
- how you communicate with your team
- what one useful action you can take next.

### Notice what's going well

When pressure is high, your mind can get stuck on what's not working. Make a point of asking:

- What's going well on the farm right now?
- What have we handled well this week?
- What is one problem that we successfully worked through?
- Who has stepped up?
- What is running smoothly that I am grateful for?
- Balancing the negatives with what is still working can help keep problems in perspective and reduce the feeling that everything is going wrong.

## Break it down

Do not carry the whole season in your head at once.

Break things into:

- today
- this week
- this month.

Ask yourself:

- What actually needs to be done today?
- What can wait?
- What am I worrying about that I cannot solve today?

## Keep some basic structure in the day

On dairy farms, routines matter for you just as they do for your cows. Try to protect a few basics:

- eat properly, even if it is simple
- drink water
- take 10 minutes off the bike, ute or tractor
- maintain safe working conditions to minimise the risk of further pressures
- write tomorrow's priorities down before bed
- set a point at night when you stop going over numbers and problems.

These kinds of practical habits are consistent with iFarmWell's wellbeing tips and farmer-focused self-care advice.

## Protect sleep where you can

Sleep often takes a hit when people are stressed, but poor sleep makes everything feel harder and increases safety risks. Practical options include:

- avoid staying up late worrying over figures
- write down tomorrow's jobs so they are out of your head
- cut back on caffeine late in the day
- share pressure where possible instead of carrying it alone.

## Talk it through with someone

Do not do all the thinking alone. Talk with:

- your partner or family
- a trusted employee
- another farmer
- your adviser, accountant or consultant
- a rural financial counsellor if money stress is building.

## Stay connected to something other than the problem

Try not to let every conversation be about costs, weather or pressure. A short chat, a break with someone else, or time spent talking about something unrelated can help reset your headspace. iFarmWell is built specifically to help Australian farmers cope effectively with challenges and get more out of each day.

## Make one change that would make this week easier

Ask yourself:

- What is one thing I can stop doing for now?
- What could I simplify?
- What could I ask someone else to take off my plate?
- What would make this week 10% easier?
- One practical change is often more helpful than carrying a long list of worries with no action.

## Watch for warning signs

Take it seriously if you notice:

- poor sleep night after night
- irritability or snapping at people
- increasing safety incidents or near misses
- feeling flat or hopeless
- trouble concentrating
- withdrawing from others
- relying more on alcohol to switch off
- feeling like you are not coping.

## Get support early

If things are building up, speak to your GP or use available supports such as Lifeline, Beyond Blue, MensLine or Rural Financial Counselling. These supports are listed in the **National Centre for Farmer Health's current stressful season resources**.

## Key message

You do not have to enjoy the situation to manage it well. Focus on what you can control, notice what is still going well, and take one practical step at a time.

Simple self-check questions

- What is one thing going well right now?
- What have I handled well this week?
- What is one thing I can control today?
- What can wait?
- Who can help me think this through?
- What would make this week a bit easier?

### Disclaimer

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