
Managing livestock health after a flood

Information as at 20 February 2019

The immediate issues for livestock during and following floods often relate to trauma, injury and exposure to the elements. Once the immediate danger has been overcome, producers should consider the following factors.

Infectious diseases

Livestock disease can be common following flooding including:

- [Leptospirosis](#)—moisture provides favourable survival conditions for the organisms that cause leptospirosis. Infection is mainly spread through ingestion or contamination of broken skin with the urine of infected animals.
- Clostridial disease:
 - [blackleg](#)—spores can be exposed by the effects of soil erosion or movement.
 - [botulism](#)—can occur from the ingestion of the botulinum toxin found in rotting animal material or the bones of dead animals.
- Respiratory disease—such as pneumonia can be common following flooding.
- Disease from parasites and insects—numbers of parasites and insects can significantly increase following flooding which can result in an increased disease risk.
- Skin infections—can occur due to prolonged wetness of wool/hair (e.g. rain scald, lumpy wool).

The transmission of infectious diseases from recently deceased animals to surviving livestock is unlikely in the short term. Surviving livestock are unlikely to graze near recently deceased and decomposing cattle.

Parasite and insect issues

After flooding, animals can be particularly susceptible to certain parasites and insect numbers can significantly increase. These issues can be associated with increased parasite and insect numbers:

- [Bovine ephemeral fever \(BEF\)](#)—BEF or three day sickness is transmitted via arthropods (mainly mosquitoes).
- [Insect worry](#)—persistent biting can cause distress and loss of production in livestock.
- [Worm infestation](#)—moist conditions favour the survival of worm eggs and larvae on pasture.
- [Fly strike](#)—prolonged wet and hot weather produces conditions favourable conditions for flystrike.
- [Tick fever](#)—the risk of tick fever can increase with wet and warm weather. The distribution of ticks carrying tick fever can change after a flood event.

Plant poisoning

Flooding can cause the growth or increased abundance of many toxic plants. Take care to minimise the risks. More information on managing plant poisoning can be found [here](#).

Foot / hoof disease

Livestock standing in flood water for prolonged periods can cause injury and allow the entry of bacteria and foreign matter. More information on foot / hoof disease can be found [here](#).

Talk to your private veterinarian for management options including vaccination and treatment. More information on disaster recovery for livestock producers can be found [here](#).