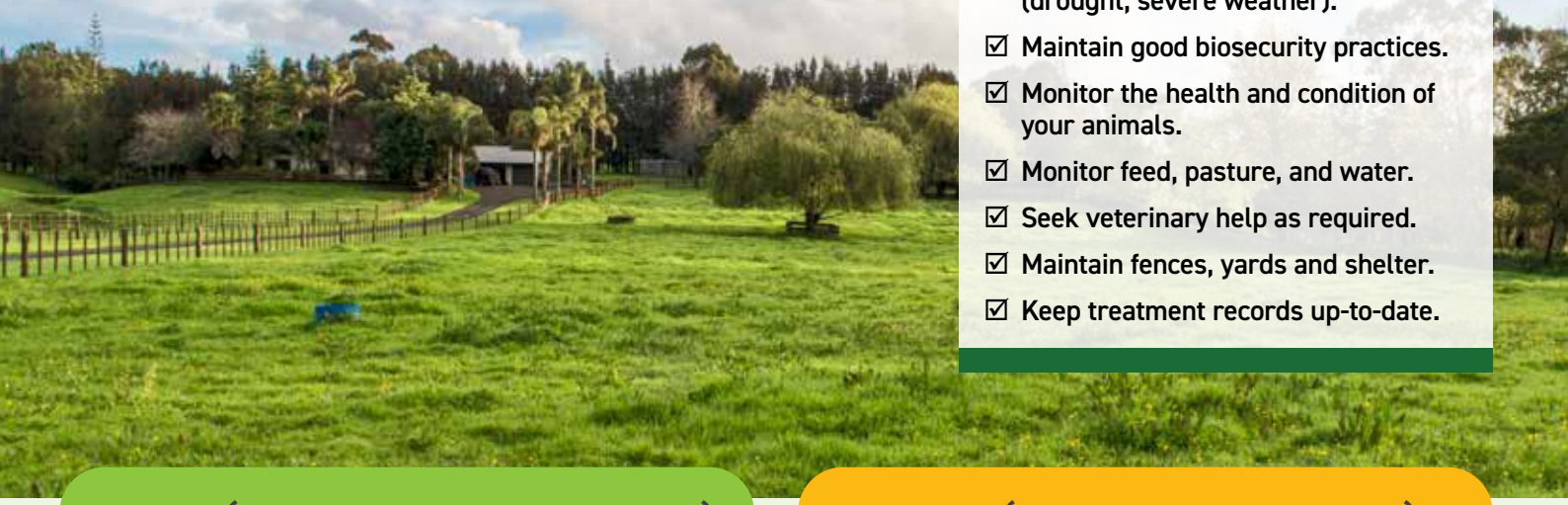
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Managing your lifestyle or small block through the seasons

A growing number of New Zealanders are choosing to live on lifestyle or small blocks. Having animals, such as cattle, sheep, and horses, comes with added responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. This seasonal calendar gives you practical information on how to prepare and minimise welfare issues.



Year round

- ☑ Keep NAIT up-to-date.
- ☑ Prepare for adverse events (drought, severe weather).
- ☑ Maintain good biosecurity practices.
- ☑ Monitor the health and condition of your animals.
- ☑ Monitor feed, pasture, and water.
- ☑ Seek veterinary help as required.
- ☑ Maintain fences, yards and shelter.
- ☑ Keep treatment records up-to-date.

Spring (September – November)

Spring is often the busiest time of the year on a lifestyle block. Planning can prevent or minimise animal welfare issues.

Calving, lambing, and foaling

- Closely monitor cows, ewes, and mares for prolonged labour, abnormal presentations, and signs of maternal distress.
- Monitor newborns for signs of ill-health, including lethargy, a cold mouth, swollen navels, or scours.
- Monitor cows, ewes, and mares for mastitis.
- Have an oral drench strategy for parasites in young animals.
- Consult your veterinarian about vaccination programmes.
- Carry out docking and castration (if required).
- Trace mineral checks (e.g. selenium, copper).
- If you have cattle or deer, ensure you meet your NAIT obligations via OSPRI (tag, register, and record movements).

General

- Shear ewes and crutch lambs.
- Conserve surplus pasture by making supplementary feed. Develop a feed plan for hot, dry conditions.
- Plan matings and set key dates (cattle).
- Monitor the health of chickens (if you have them).

Summer (December-February)

Summer on a lifestyle block can bring dry conditions, which can reduce pasture growth, and increase water scarcity and fire risk.

- Check feed availability against livestock numbers. Destock as required.
- Book any animals with processors early.
- Monitor and treat for flystrike.
- Treat for facial eczema.
- Monitor young stock for internal parasites.
- Create and review an emergency evacuation plan. See *Make an Emergency Plan – Template* below.
- Check water supply, quantity, and quality. If you're on tank water, book any required refills early.
- Ensure animals, such as sheep, goats, alpacas and llamas, are shorn by early summer.
- Ensure animals have adequate shade and shelter.
- Monitor livestock for signs of heat stress.
- Weed control.

Autumn (March-May)

Autumn is preparation season – a time to prepare for winter and set up animals for the coming season.

- Assess and improve the body condition of livestock ahead of winter.
- Conduct faecal egg count (FEC) tests with your vet and treat as needed.
- Consider reducing stocking rate (animal numbers) ahead of winter.
- Plan matings and set key dates (sheep).
- Check ram/bull fertility and condition.
- Plan and budget winter feed requirements. Secure any required supplementary feed early.
- Pregnancy scan to help inform feed allocation.
- Pre-mating vaccinations.

Winter (June-August)

Winter on a lifestyle block can bring wet, cold conditions, which can reduce pasture growth.

- Ensure you have adequate supplies on hand for lambing and calving. You can find further tips in the *Spring* section.
- Match livestock numbers to available feed.
- Provide shelter and minimise pugging (mud) and pasture damage.
- Monitor and maintain body condition score.
- Manage break feeding and grazing.
- Provide mineral supplementation (e.g. magnesium pre-calving and lambing).
- Start organising equipment and supplies if you're planning to rear a lamb, goat, calf, or pullets for your school calf club. See *Practical guide to rearing lambs* below.
- Order NAIT tags for cattle and deer.

Helpful resources and support

Lifestyle Block Emergency Preparedness Handbook
- Lifestyle Block Emergency Preparedness Handbook

Make an Emergency Plan – Template
- Make a Plan

Stocking rate calculator for lifestyle blocks
- Lifestyle Block Stocking Calculator NZ | How Many Animals on My Block

Sheep and cattle feed plan
- FeedSmart: sheep and cattle feed and allocation calculator

Farmlands Lifestyle Guide – Information and resources for lifestyle block owners
- Farmlands Lifestyle Guide by Farmlands – Issuu

Lifestyle block animals advice (SPCA)
- Advice & welfare: Lifestyle block animals • SPCA New Zealand

Practical guide to rearing lambs
- Practical guide to rearing lambs

Biosecurity on your farm or lifestyle block
- Biosecurity on your farm or lifestyle block | NZ Government

NAIT resources for lifestyle farmers (cattle and deer owners)
- Lifestyle farmers and pet owners | OSPRI

Contact your veterinarian or a rural professional for advice.

