



Drought Planning Resource

This drought planning resource has been developed to help sheep producers manage dry times.

This resource brings together a range of tools to help you identify your current position and be proactive in mapping out key decisions for short-term planning.

Taking the time to write down your drought plan will make it easier to hold yourself to important decisions.

Though an individual's response to changing seasonal conditions may differ, effective strategic planning and early decision making will limit the impact of drought on your flock, business and personal well-being.

STEP 1: Assess your current position

Before setting triggers and strategies in your drought plan, it's important to understand your current position.

The table below lists the key factors to consider, and the resources available to help you. This list is not definitive, but should provide a good starting point.

| FACTORS | AVAILABLE RESOURCES |
|--|---|
| Pasture budget and supplement reserves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasture budget (e.g. StockTake GLM app) Drought and supplementary feed calculators (e.g. NSW DPI Drought & Supplementary Feed Calculator) Climate and pasture information (e.g. The Long Paddock) |
| Current and projected cash flow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banker and accountant Personal records, particularly overheads that will remain unchanged regardless of season and drought associated enterprise expenses |
| Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock water calculator (e.g. Making More from Sheep Stock Water Calculation Table) |
| Rainfall, soil moisture and forecasts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecasts and climate models (e.g. Bureau of Meteorology) Rainfall probabilities based on historical data (e.g. Australian CliMate) |
| Livestock status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal herd/flock records (numbers, reproduction status and weights) Stocking rate calculators (e.g. MLA Stocking Rate Calculator) Body condition scoring (e.g. Lifetime Wool resources) |

When assessing your current position, include as much or as little detail as you want. Also focus on the key factors that offer the most context to inform your decision making.

STEP 2: Set and document short term triggers (decision dates or events) and planned strategies

With a clear picture of your current position, it's important to set triggers and strategies based on the following factors:

- Financial return and payback period, particularly the breakeven point from each strategy
- Availability and impact on resources, including financial, animal welfare, land condition and personal health
- Timing, particularly your position in the growing season (i.e. how long until you expect rain), and pasture reserves

Depending on the trigger, strategies could include selling stock, production feeding, maintenance feeding or agistment.

Things to remember before choosing a strategy:

- Collect facts and figures on different strategies (e.g. feed costs, rainfall records, prices, agistment availability and cost and subsidies or support), using resources such as a feed cost calculator (e.g. [NSW DPI Feed Cost Calculator](#)), drought and supplementary feed calculator, and a [sell or feed calculator](#).
- Cost the strategies across various lengths of drought (e.g. no rain in 3, 6, 12 months)

Select the strategy that best fits your situation and your objectives.

| EXAMPLE TRIGGERS | EXAMPLE STRATEGIES |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the pasture growing season/...../....., and middle of the dry season/...../..... • At weaning/...../..... • No rain by/...../..... • • • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy scan, identify what to sell • Set end date for supplementary feeding (e.g. until weaning or expected next season production point) • Early weaning • Use condition scoring and reproduction records to identify smaller proportion of ewes to be joined • Marketing strategy for wool and meat • |

STEP 3: Identify key barriers

Think about previous decisions, and list a few common issues that can catch you out and change your plans (e.g. I don't want to consider price in deciding to sell, unless it is less than X amount; I don't want to consider agistment because it's too time consuming)

Barrier 1:

Barrier 2:

Barrier 3:

STEP 4: Communicate your plans

It's easier to achieve your goals and hold yourself to informed decisions if you communicate your plans with others (e.g. family, staff, banks, advisors)

I have communicated my plans with my family, staff, bank and/or advisors

STEP 5: Review

- Did you set a date to review your drought planning strategy?
- Were you able to stick to your decisions and strategies? Why or why not?
- What would you like to remember about this process in 12 months?
- Review your longer-term approach: How does it align with what you've learnt?
- Consider any tweaks or new strategies.