

## Sam's top tips on managing stress

1. Treat yourself as your farm's number one asset. Make your health and wellbeing a business priority.
2. Build rest and recovery into your daily and weekly work schedule. All top sports teams build in downtime as no one can go 110% all the time without a break.
3. Prioritise during busy times. What are the top two tasks you need to work on today? Once you're feeling back in charge your stress levels will go down.
4. Look after the basics. Eat well, get enough quality sleep, keep active and get 'farm fit' for busier periods.
5. Talk to mates and stay connected. Others have been there and everyone needs support. If you're in a relationship talk things through together.
6. Get off farm and do stuff you enjoy—hunting, fishing, team sport, kids' sport, horse riding, contributing at community events—whatever helps recharge you.
7. Think in ways that keep things in perspective and that help boost your mood.

“ You need that strong commitment to keeping yourself well, because the farming environment can be bloody challenging. ”  
**Eliot Cooper, farmer**

## What is burnout?

Burnout is a way to describe feeling physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted. It is accompanied by feelings of ineffectiveness, lack of accomplishment, cynicism and detachment.

It's your body letting you know that it can no longer cope with the demands you are placing on it and that you need a break. It can sneak up on you like a slow leak in a tractor tyre. Health, relationships and family life can suffer. It can also make you more at risk of accident and injury.

“ I think farmers are classic at looking after their pasture and their buildings and machinery, but they just work themselves into the ground. Burnout is a real thing, so in order to be sustainable as a business you actually have to look after yourself. ”

**Siobhan O'Malley, Sharemilker of the Year 2017**



**Find out what works for you then lock it in.**

**Sam Whitelock** Farmstrong Ambassador

Farmstrong is a rural wellbeing programme sharing farmer-to-farmer tips and advice. *Find out more at*  
**[farmstrong.co.nz](http://farmstrong.co.nz)**

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## Under the pump?

Here are some questions that can help you get through.

Sam Whitelock  
**FARMSTRONG  
 AMBASSADOR**



- ☒ Am I getting enough sleep?
- ☒ Am I talking to someone about what's on my mind?
- ☒ Am I eating well and keeping physically active?
- ☒ Am I having down-time to recharge?
- ☒ Do I have a list of what is realistic to achieve each day?

Using these questions to lock in small changes can make a big difference.

## Handling ups and downs

Farming has its share of highs, lows and challenges. Heavy workloads, combined with things outside a farmer's control such as weather and market prices, can increase the risk of unhealthy stress and burnout.

Research shows that stress and fatigue are also contributing factors to accident and injury on the farm.

The good news is that knowing the warning signs and acting on them helps to manage stress and prevent burnout.

“ Sport has taught me that making a habit of investing in your wellbeing means you will have some to draw on when you are under the pump. That's why you've got to take time to look after yourself. ”

**Sam Whitelock**, Farmstrong Ambassador



## Signs of unhealthy stress – what to look out for

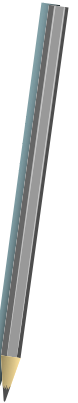
### Your body

- ☐ Breathing problems
- ☐ Chest tightness
- ☐ Upset stomach e.g. nausea, diarrhoea, constipation
- ☐ Tension, aches and pains
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Feeling 'wired'—unable to relax
- ☐ Lower immunity, catching any little bug going around and taking longer to recover
- ☐ Reduced sex drive



### Your emotions

- ☐ Worrying excessively
- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed, stuck or trapped
- ☐ 'Short fuse'—bursts of anger often at small issues
- ☐ Tearfulness
- ☐ Feeling down
- ☐ Feeling lonely
- ☐ Loss of motivation and enjoyment
- ☐ Reduced self-confidence



### Your actions and behaviour

- ☐ Sleep problems e.g. can't get to sleep or wake up often, or sleeping too much and can't get out of bed
- ☐ Poor eating
- ☐ Withdrawing from people and activities
- ☐ Unhealthy alcohol, tobacco and caffeine use
- ☐ Becoming reactive rather than proactive
- ☐ Avoiding situations or issues e.g. not returning phone calls or opening invoices
- ☐ Delaying demanding tasks e.g. daggling sheep



### Your mind

- ☐ Thinking feels sped up and thoughts are intrusive
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions
- ☐ Forgetfulness
- ☐ Poor concentration
- ☐ Poor problem solving
- ☐ Easily distracted



**If you are concerned about yourself or someone else, talk to someone.**

**Contact your doctor, the Rural Support Trust (0800 787 254) or the 'Need to Talk' helpline on 1737 (text or phone 24/7).**

Checklist developed by Sarah Donaldson, TEA Health and Wellbeing.