

Power Up for Calving Season

Calving can be a busy and demanding time. Preparing well beforehand and managing workload and rest and recovery time along the way can make a huge difference to how you feel.

Here are a few tips farmers have shared with Farmstrong about how they get through calving. You can find other relevant resources on the Farmstrong website.



'Don't Run on Empty'

Eating well during calving is the equivalent of putting the right 'fuel in the tank' in a vehicle. Regular nutritious meals and snacks are essential to provide the energy and nutrients your body needs to do a physically demanding job.

Some practical strategies are:

- **Cook once and eat twice:** Prepare double or triple batches of meals like bolognaise, soup, casserole, or curry and freeze the remainder for later.
- **Use a slow cooker:** Pile everything into it in the morning and have a hearty meal ready by dinner time.
- **Have fast and easy options:** Keep nourishing smoothies, scrambled eggs, muesli with fruit and yoghurt, or a meat, cheese, and tomato toasted sandwich available for days when you lack energy.
- **Remember to snack:** When you are doing physical work throughout the day regular snacks are important to top up the fuel in your body and maintain your energy levels.



Give Yourself a 'Breather'

Schedule short breaks during the day to help you 'recharge the batteries' and pace yourself. When you're busy, taking 5-10 minutes for a 'breather' might seem odd, but it actually makes you more productive and efficient in the long run.

Calving can also be mentally sapping. If you start feeling flat, schedule a little rest and recovery time off farm. A few hours away doing something that 'fills your cup' will boost your mood and help you 'reset' so you are good to go again.



Stay Connected

If you're feeling 'under the pump' during calving make time to connect with others. Catch-ups with family, mates and neighbours are a big part of staying well and getting through challenging times. Surround yourself with people who are upbeat, pragmatic and able to give you a different perspective. And if you see someone struggling give them a call or flick them a text and schedule a catch up over a cuppa or a beer to lighten their load.



Add some mental skills to your toolkit

Calving season can be a pressured time. The good news is that just like you become physically fitter you can also learn skills that will make you mentally stronger. Adding these mental skills to your toolkit will help you manage pressure, avoid common thinking traps and deal with setbacks and frustrations. The Farmstrong toolkit will help you head into calving with the right mindset.



Get in Shape

Calving is physically demanding. Anything that makes you fitter and stronger before all that lifting is a good idea. The Farmstrong Fit for Calving videos show simple stretches and exercises to help prepare your body. They are specially designed to strengthen muscle groups used during calving season and will help you avoid unnecessary strains and injuries.



“Keeping yourself mentally and physically fit just helps everything flow better on farm. On the good days it all comes so easy, but it’s on the bad days that being Farmstrong comes in real handy.” **Amber Carpenter, dairy farmer, Paparimu**



“I’d often be invited along on a three-day hunting trip right in the middle of calving, but always turned it down because we were so busy. That really frustrated me. So instead of not doing anything at all during calving, I started to do half a day’s fishing or hunting. If I just picked a nice warm, afternoon when things were going well I could get off farm and come back feeling positive.” **South Canterbury dairy farmer Matt Goodwin**



“Farmstrong taught me to think differently and coach my mind to have constructive thoughts. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, visit the Farmstrong website and watch their videos. You’ll soon understand why you feel the way you do and what you can do about it.” **Paul Walker, Bay of Plenty dairy farmer**



“When life gets stressful on farm being able to take back a bit of control is important. I think the more tools you have in your toolbelt to help you keep well and deal with stress the better. There’s a lot of good, practical stuff that farmers are sharing through Farmstrong.” **Kane Brisco, dairy farmer, Taranaki**

Check out this Farmstrong resource:
Eat Well, Farm Better



Farmstrong is a nationwide, rural wellbeing programme that helps farmers manage the ups and downs of farming and growing. Last year, more than 15,000 farmers boosted their wellbeing thanks to Farmstrong. For free tools and resources visit www.farmstrong.co.nz.