

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK



“The number one thing is to look after myself. If I don't look after myself, I can't look after my family, our team, our farm.”

DYLAN AND SHEREE DITCHFIELD,
FARMERS, SOUTHLAND

GETTING AWAY

DYLAN DITCHFIELD,
farmer, Southland

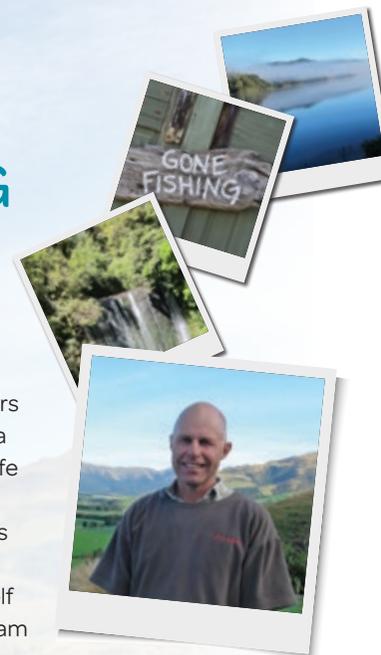
“One of the things farmers tend to do is say ‘yes’ to a lot of things. We fill our life up and it becomes really hectic. Managing stress is mostly about prioritising things. Looking at yourself in the mirror and asking ‘am I burnt out, am I sleeping right, eating right, have I got too many things on, do I need a break?’

Taking breaks is something that Sheree and I have always been good at. Even when things are busy on farm, it's vital that we go and spend time with our kids and have some fun time with them.

Sheree and I take two family holidays a year and one of them will be for two weeks. It may be the lakes or up north seeing family. It doesn't have to involve spending a lot of money. It's just a matter of going away from the farm and enjoying each other's company and bonding as a family.

Those times away also allow us to do some brainstorming. What actually happens is that your mind has got a lot of space in it because you are not looking around at what needs to be done like hanging a gate or fixing a fence. That's what fills your mind up. You go away and relax and suddenly all these ideas just start to flow.

We also try and get away during weekends, getting involved in the kids sport and activities. That's really important too. Just getting away from the farm and meeting people who aren't involved in farming.”



“You've definitely got to get off the place, whether it's going to the local footy match on a Saturday or booking a trip away. When you come back, you are just more refreshed.”

JAMES PHARAZYN, manager, Sheep, Beef and Angus Stud Farm, Hawkes Bay



“Taking time off is a fundamental to keep on top of things. As a bare minimum, it's about taking one or two days off a week, and making sure you stick to that as much as possible.”

RICHARD ASH, dairy farm manager and 2015 Sharemilker of the Year



“You can always find an excuse to stay on the farm, but we know we need to take regular breaks to keep ourselves mentally fresh. We'll put it down on the calendar and then even if something comes up, that's the priority and you stick to it.”

STU RICHARDS, manager, bull finishing unit, Whatawhata



“In the last 3 months I've had three weeks away doing other things. How do I do that? By having good rosters, having good staff, and booking it in and sticking to it.”

TONY COLTMAN, dairy farmer, Dunsandel, Canterbury



When did you last have a break?

The best way to make sure you get needed time off the farm is to plan for it and diary it. Your break might be a two-week holiday, or just a weekend away or an afternoon activity. Remember, a short break is better than none.

Schedule it now. Don't wait until everything is done or you'll never take a break.

When is your next break?

<i>Short breaks and activities</i>	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	
<i>Holidays</i>	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHERE	
WHEN	

Detach and put up as a reminder.



Your checklist ✓

How do you get beyond good intentions and make sure you get the breaks you need? Here are some ideas from other farmers.

- Make time off a business goal**
You are your farm's most valuable asset. A serious commitment to you and your family's health and wellbeing needs to be part of your business plan.
- Plan your break and just do it**
Act on your good intentions. Schedule your holiday for non-peak times of the year. Plan it ahead – don't wait until you need the break.
- Trust your staff, learn to delegate**
Learning to delegate and trust others is a game-changer. Trust others to get things done, even if they do it a little differently to how you do it. Train others to take your place.
- Do swaps with neighbours**
An obvious solution to getting some time off is for neighbours to support one another to take some time off. Get your neighbor to look after your farm for a week and you look after theirs in return. Or maybe see if some retired local farmers can help out.
- Take short breaks as well as a good holiday**
It doesn't need to be a long holiday to make a difference. Plan mini-breaks – even a few days can be enough to free the mind and and come back feeling refreshed.
- Try something different**
Short breaks come in many forms. Try a new sport, read a book, see a show, anything that gives you energy and helps you to see the world a little differently. The mind needs refreshing.



Research shows that taking breaks and getting time off the farm makes a huge difference to how you feel and how well you farm. Yet it's often the thing that slips down the priority list.

Aim for some downtime every day, at least one day off a week, and one decent holiday break a year.

Don't fool yourself that long hours equal best results. Research on workplace fatigue shows that when people are tired:

- their brain doesn't function as well
- they have trouble thinking through issues
- they find it harder to make decisions
- their coordination is impaired and they are at a higher risk of an accident.

Being productive is about working smarter, not longer hours. It's about managing workload and scheduling downtime for other activities. That's what gives you the energy to think clearly and perform at your best.

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