

Livestock water quality following flood contamination

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Good quality water is essential to maintain livestock health. It is likely that stock water supplies have been contaminated on properties affected by flood waters.

The water may be murky, discoloured and have an unpalatable taste and odour. This can be due to high levels of suspended matter, organic wastes, chemical pollutants, bacteria and/or algae.

There may also be debris or dead carcasses that have been washed by flood waters onto the property. Water quality in these situations may not be suitable for livestock.

Although livestock may have access to a sufficient quantity of water, they may refuse to drink it if the water tastes or smells unpleasant. This is often the case after floods and black water events.

In these circumstances, stock should ideally be provided access to either reticulated tank or bore water of a suitable quality.

If a dam affected by flood water is the sole water supply on a property, it is important to assess the quality of the water and monitor stock to ensure that they are actually drinking from their water supply. This is especially important in hot weather.

The pollution of water supplies by excess levels of nutrients carried by floodwaters can be a contributing factor to the occurrence of algal blooms at this time of year. Farm dams should be monitored closely for algal growth, particularly the toxic blue green algae.

Stagnant water lying in paddocks also poses a risk to livestock health. Where possible, stock should be excluded from areas where stagnant water is present in paddocks.

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on: 136 186, TTY: 1800 122 969, or email customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au

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Goulburn Murray Water (GWM) is working to support the delivery of stock and domestic water where possible for farmers normally serviced by the MGW system. Farmers may call MGW on **1300 469 469** or contact their local GMW office.

Water testing service

Livestock owners who are concerned about the quality of their livestock water supply are encouraged to test the water. A Bendigo based laboratory - Australian Laboratory Services, (contact 5441 0700) offers a water quality testing service for a fee of around \$240 per sample. The test result is generally available within five days, although the turn around time may be reduced in certain circumstances.

Aeration of contaminated farm dam water

The Australian Laboratory Services says it may be useful to aerate dam water supplies that are beginning to smell. Aeration will assist to lower the smell of decaying organic material in the water.

Obviously gross organic contaminants should be removed where possible, especially any animal carcasses.

Aeration of dam water may be achieved by recycling the dam water through pumping it up into the air or onto the dam wall allowing the water to drain back into the dam.

Aeration of the water will assist in improving the quality, but the process should not be relied on as a guarantee of water safety for livestock.

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