



ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE AGRIBUSINESS

## **AgForce establishes crisis team as 'too much rain' threatens cattle industry**

**Wednesday, 6 February 2019**

Last week's joy at receiving the first decent rains for many years has turned to alarm for many cattle producers across northern Queensland, as they watch their properties wash away and their herds decimated by muddy floodwaters.

The potential for catastrophe across a large proportion of the industry has seen AgForce establish a crisis management team to ensure affected producers receive the support they need to come through this unprecedented disaster.

**An immediate need of many is for fodder to be airlifted to isolated cattle, many of which are weakened by years of drought. Producers who need fodder are encouraged to contact AgForce or their Local Disaster Management Group, via their local Council.**

AgForce CEO Michael Guerin, said although it was too early for a precise estimate of the financial cost from livestock losses and damage to property and equipment, it was likely to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

"At the moment, affected producers are unable to leave their houses - which now resemble islands - to assess the state of their livestock or inspect damage to grazing land, buildings, equipment or fences," Mr Guerin said.

"Our first priority is talking to AgForce members, which represent more than 50% of the cattle industry in Queensland, to determine the scale of the disaster and the sort of resources and services they will need to get through the next few weeks.

"Past experience of these events indicates that stock losses on the worst-affected properties are likely to be significant."

Mr Guerin said the impact of the floods had been exacerbated by the drought conditions which had existed in those areas until a few days ago.

"Stock losses will be much higher than normal, because drought-weakened cattle are more susceptible to being caught and drowned in floodwaters or dying of exposure in the wet, cold winds," he said.

"This is absolutely heart-breaking for producers who have expended enormous amounts of money and energy keeping their herds alive through the drought, only to see them now devastated by floods.

"The emotional, as well as financial, impact will be extreme, and AgForce will do our utmost to ensure these producers receive the support and care, as well as the financial assistance, they need."

Mr Guerin said AgForce would mobilise its resources, expertise in farming, connections across the sector and close relationships across industry and State and Local Government.

"Our crisis management team will meet daily to move issues up to the highest levels of Government to ensure situations are quickly recognised, responded to, and no areas are left overlooked," he said.



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"We will also be reaching out to local governments across the region, which whom we have excellent working relationships, to see if there is anything we can do to help.

"For example, trucking in fodder from the Northern Territory or New South Wales to keep cattle alive until new grass can grow may be something we can facilitate.

"But most importantly, we will ensure the interests of our members are front and centre, especially as much of the focus will be on the residents of Townsville and the urban centres. We must ensure the breadth of the recovery area is sufficient to include all affected producers across the northern half of Queensland."

Ends.

**Footage of AgForce CEO Mike Guerin discussing North Qld flooding available here: <http://bit.ly/2DV5do4>**

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