

# Central Highlands Agricultural Flood Recovery

## Newsletter #02 08/03/22

Moorabool Shire, Hepburn Shire and City of Ballarat's farming communities were hit by a storm and flood event on 5-6 January 2022. This is the third major weather event that the three LGAs have experienced since June last year. These weather events are normally considered a '1 in 100 years' occurrence.

Councils are working alongside Agriculture Victoria to assist all farmers in this difficult recovery journey. We would like to acknowledge and thank you for your continued resilience in the face of this severe threat to your livelihood. If you haven't already, please reach out to your local Council who can guide you through the available support.



Moorabool Shire Council  
Ph: (03) 5366 1323

Hepburn Shire Council  
Ph: (03) 4373 7373

City of Ballarat  
Ph: (03) 5320 5500

## Farm Household Allowance

This program aims to provide targeted assistance that gives farming families practical support to assess their situation and plan a way forward to long-term financial security. It is an Australian Government support package that's available to eligible farmers and their partners experiencing financial hardship.

FHA can be paid to farmers and their partners up to a maximum of four cumulative years (1,460 days of payment) within the specific 10-year period while they take action to address their long-term financial security.

To find out if you can apply, visit <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/farm-household-allowance>

## Recovery grants for primary producers impacted by 9-10 June storm

Were you also impacted by the 9-10 June storm event in 2021? You may be eligible for this grant opportunity.

The maximum amount available for this program is \$25,000 and the money will go towards clean-up and recovery activities needed to reinstate primary production enterprises.

To apply or to see if you're eligible, visit <https://www.ruralfinance.com.au/industry-programs/victorian-floods-andstorms-clean-up-and-restoration-grants>

## Personal Hardship Assistance Program

Department Families, Fairness & Housing (formerly DHS) has available payments for affected residents to assist with recovery from emergency events.

The Personal Hardship Assistance Program provides assistance to people experiencing financial hardship in meeting their relief needs because of a single house fire or a natural disaster related emergency such as bushfire, flood, severe storm or earthquake.

The Personal Hardship Assistance Program provides two forms of emergency financial assistance:

1. Emergency Relief Assistance to meet the immediate relief needs of families/individuals.
2. Emergency Re-establishment Assistance to help families/individuals re-establish a principal place of residence.

Find out more: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/personal-hardship-assistance-program>

## Emergency relief assistance

A one-off payment is provided to eligible people to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing, medication and accommodation.

This payment is generally paid within seven days of an emergency event.

## Emergency re-establishment assistance

Emergency re-establishment assistance payments may be available in addition to emergency relief payments.

There are strict eligibility criteria for this payment, including:

- Must be principal place of residence
- Property or contents are not insured
- Meet income thresholds

The payments are used for:

- clean-up
- emergency accommodation
- repairs
- rebuilding (a principal place of residence)
- replacing some damaged contents.

Payments can be provided in a number of ways, including via direct debit transfer into your nominated bank account, or by a physical card.

If you've been recently impacted by natural disaster incidents, such as storms, floods and fires, contact your local council to discuss your needs and relief supports available.



## Flood-affected farmers encouraged to reach out to Rural Aid

Rural Aid counsellors and community representatives are supporting farmers in the Central Highlands, in the wake of freak storms and floods.

Rural Aid counsellor Sue Jensen has been on the ground in Creswick and Dean, talking to farmers and viewing damaged crops.

"Sadly, dozens of farmers had their crops badly damaged earlier this year," Ms Jensen said.

"Hundreds of hectares of potatoes, canola and pyrethrum have either been wiped out, or have rotted in the wet conditions.

"It's a tough time for these farmers, who've already been up against it with storm recovery from previous weather events as well as pandemic and supply chain challenges."

Rural Aid is Australia's most trusted rural charity and provides critical support to farmers affected by natural disaster through financial, wellbeing and fodder assistance.

Rural Aid also offers domestic water deliveries, bundles of fence posts, and a Farm Army platform that connects farmers with volunteers and workers.

Ms Jensen said Rural Aid's free counselling service is specially tailored for primary producers and their family members.

"We catch up with farmers where they're most comfortable," Ms Jensen said.

"That can be on-farm, in town, or over the phone. One of the best places to chat is at the kitchen table over a cuppa. It doesn't need to be anything formal; it's really just a chance to listen and talk."

"Having a chat when you're going through a tough time can make a real difference and take a huge weight off your shoulders."

Primary producers are encouraged to register with Rural Aid to access the full suite of services provided.

Farmers can register at [www.ruralaid.org.au](http://www.ruralaid.org.au) or by calling 1300 327 624.

Sue Jensen, Rural Aid's counsellor for the Central Highlands, can be contacted on 0460 313 207.



*For our mates  
in the bush*





## Free fence posts thanks to Rural Aid

Primary producers from Hepburn Shire and Moorabool Shire are able to order one kilometre of free fence posts to aid in the recovery from the June 2021 storm and flood event. Unfortunately, this initiative was created in 2021 and impacted primary producers from City of Ballarat are not currently eligible. If you'd like to discuss this further, please call Bill Cook, Municipal Emergency Manager at City of Ballarat on 0447 109 877.

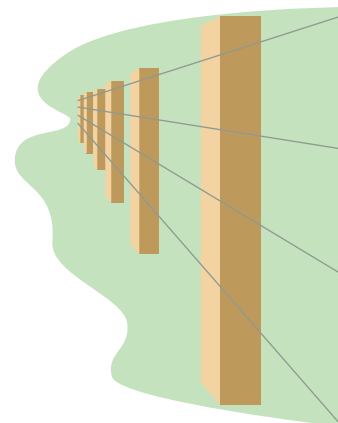
The fence posts are made from storm-damaged timber. It is repurposed from green waste obtained over the course of the clean-up program.

The initiative is facilitated by Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) who has partnered with Rural Aid and six local government areas affected by the June 2021 storm. To partake in this program, please address the following criteria.

Eligibility:

- ABN and supporting documentation to prove Primary Producer status in one of the six local government areas (Hepburn, Macedon Ranges, Moorabool, Yarra Ranges, Murrindindi, Cardinia).
- Register with Rural Aid

Find details and submit an Expression of Interest at <http://faa.ruralaid.org.au/fence-post-program/>



## Rural Financial Counselling Service support for farmers

Central Highlands region farmers can access the free support of the local rural financial counsellor team.

Your local rural financial counsellor can support you through storm recovery in a range of ways including:

- Assisting with applications including for government support packages and grants
- Referrals to specialist professionals including RFCS Victoria West's well-being counsellor
- Developing a cash flow budget and getting a clearer picture of your financial position
- Negotiating with banks, creditors, suppliers or insurance providers
- Planning for the next months and for the future

Your financial counsellor will come to you so you don't need to leave the farm or business, or can arrange another appropriate and covid-safe location. Appointments can also happen over phone or video call. The free service is ongoing for as long as needed.

Call 1300 735 578 or visit [www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au](http://www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au).

Trevor Link  
Rural Financial Counsellor  
M: 0455 333 577  
T: 1300 735 578  
E: [trevor.link@wswracs.com.au](mailto:trevor.link@wswracs.com.au)  
W: [www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au](http://www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au)

Caius Ryan  
Financial Counsellor  
M: 0427 593 713  
T: 1300 735 578  
E: [caius.ryan@wswracs.com.au](mailto:caius.ryan@wswracs.com.au)  
W: [www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au](http://www.RFCSVictoriaWest.com.au)

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Getting started is as easy as giving us a call



# Central Highlands Agricultural Flood Recovery

## Inspect your dam to avoid failure after storm and flood events

Agriculture Victoria are encouraging farmers to undertake a detailed inspection of their dams, following significant storm and flood events in recent months.

Ag Vic's farm water supply specialist Clem Sturmfels said the risk of dam failure has increased significantly, due to the rapid rise in dam water levels, overtopping of dam walls and blocked spillways.

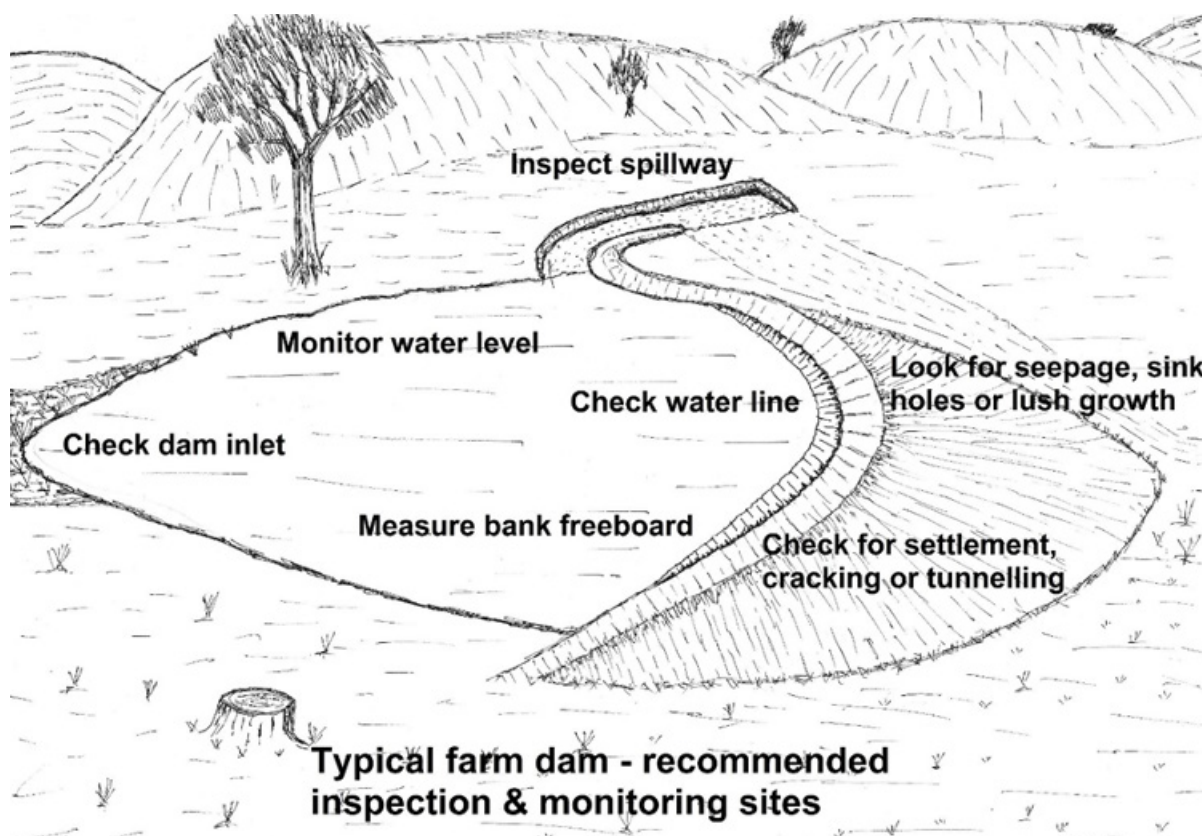
If you have a gully dam, monitor it on a regular basis to look for signs of bank subsidence, cracking, leaks and/or tunnelling.

Also check dam spillways and outlet pipes to ensure they have ample capacity and are free of sediment, debris and excessive vegetation.

The sudden failure of a gully dam can pose a major safety issue to individuals and communities downstream, as well as resulting in the loss of the water and added cost of repairs.

Landholders should contact their local Water Authority and Council Planning Officer prior to undertaking repairs or maintenance activities.

For further information on managing dams visit the Agriculture Victoria website [agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/water/managing-dams](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/water/managing-dams)



Typical farm dam – recommended inspection and monitoring sites.

## Using barley straw to prevent algae in farm dams

Barley straw is successfully used in Australia and overseas for the control of algae and green slime. Floods and erosion bring nutrients to dams, mainly nitrogen and phosphorus, that feed algae.

Barley straw works more effectively and for longer periods than wheat or other straws. If barley is unavailable, other straws, including wheat, linseed, oil seed rape, lavender stalks and maize can be used as a substitute. If other straws are used, it is likely that the quantities applied, and frequency of application may need to be increased.

### How does barley straw work?

When barley straw is put into water, it starts to decompose. During this process, natural compounds are released which inhibit the growth of algae.

Once the straw has been consumed, further additions of straw should be made to prevent a recurrence of the algae or green slime.

### How much barley straw is recommended?

In ponds, lakes and other still-water bodies, the most important measurement in calculating the quantity of straw required is the surface area of the water body. Most of the algal growth takes place in the surface layers of the water so it's not necessary to measure the depth or volume of the water body.

In still waters, the initial dose rate of straw should be between 25 and 50 grams per square metre of surface water (gm/m<sup>2</sup>). A 20 metre by 25 metre dam is 500 square metres which equates to between 12 and 25 kilograms of straw is required. This is close to the weight of a small straw bale.

### How to apply the straw?

You can get advice and kits from commercial straw sellers or you can follow these recommended steps with your own barley straw:

1. Break the straw bales apart in small biscuits
2. The loose straw should be placed in some form of netting, such as onion sacks
3. Use floats to suspend the straw-filled netting at or just below the water surface. It is recommended that floats be inserted inside the netting at the same time the netting is filled with straw. The netting is then anchored into place using rope attached to bricks or concrete-filled buckets. Water movement near the surface will keep the straw well oxygenated and move the algae inhibiting compounds throughout the upper portion of the pond or dam
4. To improve the effectiveness of the barley straw it is recommended placing several small quantities of straw nets around the dam, roughly equal distance from other nearby nets and the shore.

### Where to buy barley straw?

Barley straw can usually be found locally, ordered through farm supplies.

Onion bags can be harder to find. They can be ordered through online shopping sites, or you can try one of these suppliers:

<https://www.popes.com.au/locations-australia/>

Phone: (03) 9322 1444

Email: [vicsales@popes.com.au](mailto:vicsales@popes.com.au)

<https://www.polesy.com.au/contact/>

Tel: (03) 9310 1300

Email: [packagingvic@polesy.com.au](mailto:packagingvic@polesy.com.au)

If you are concerned that you already have blue green algae blooms, Central Highlands Water commercial laboratory can test your water for you. For more information visit <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/water/blue-green-algae-in-water/managing-bluegreen-algae-in-farm-water-supplies>