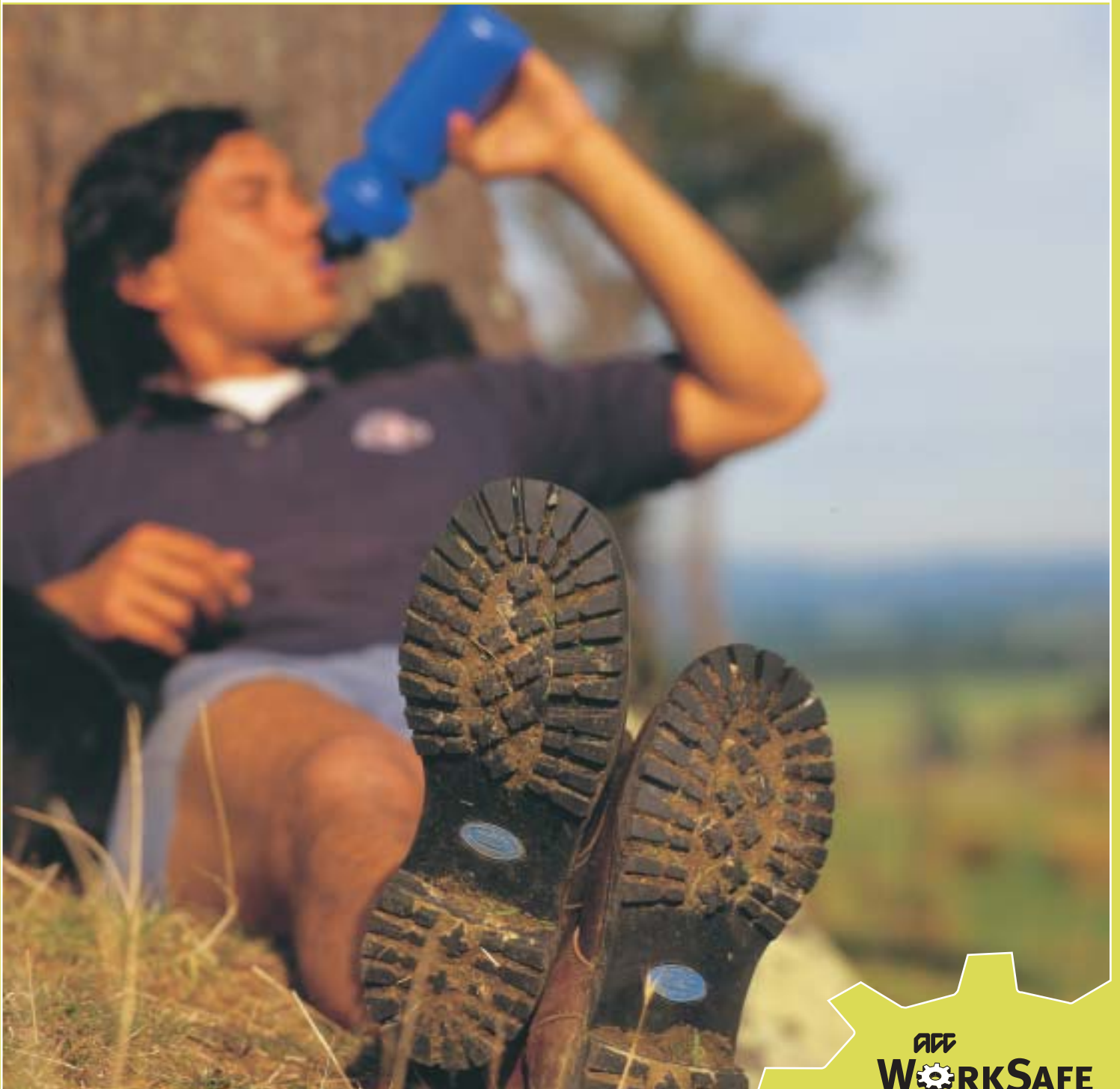




Managing Fatigue

FOR THE FARMER



→ FATIGUE

Fatigue, or extreme tiredness, can affect you both physically and mentally.

It can affect your ability to make decisions when faced with hazardous situations.

Farmers face hazards daily, and you need to be aware of the symptoms and causes of fatigue so you can eliminate or minimise factors that contribute to fatigue.

Some symptoms of fatigue are:

- slower reaction times
- difficulty in making quick, correct decisions
- completing tasks in the wrong sequence (eg, not turning off equipment that's running before dismounting to clear a clogged part or perform maintenance)
- forgetting key steps and procedures
- reduced physical ability.

Some causes of fatigue in farming are:

- ongoing long hours of work with early starts and late nights
- disrupted sleep (eg, during calving)
- time pressure (eg, working to deadlines or on unexpected extra tasks)
- long stretches of work between days off and holidays
- physically demanding and strenuous tasks (eg, handling calves and drenching cattle)
- weather conditions that make work harder
- noisy machinery, long periods of standing, insufficient ventilation and lighting
- not eating a balanced diet, so your body isn't "fuelled" for the job
- dehydration, which contributes to physical and mental fatigue and could have long-term health effects
- big operations – especially with not enough (or poorly designed) sheds and too few employees
- a medical condition (eg, a viral illness, or the effects of overexposure to pesticides).

You may be able to reduce fatigue and its effects by:

- planning and redesigning tasks to reduce excessive physical or mental exertion and to allow recovery breaks
- taking regular breaks as well as meal breaks (eg, several 10-minute breaks)
- planning and budgeting for extra staff at busy times (eg, during calving)
- delegating jobs or sharing workloads (especially driving and using machinery, etc)
- getting advice to ensure your facilities (eg, shed design) and staffing are well matched to your farm
- eating healthy, balanced meals (please refer to the "Eating for Energy" diagram on opposite page)
- taking proper meal breaks with time to digest, rest and recover
- arranging prepared meals for employees during busy times
- drinking cool water regularly during the day (every 15-20 minutes) – by the time you are thirsty you are already dehydrated.

Coping with physical and mental demands is easier when you're fit and healthy, so if you don't already get regular exercise on the farm, try to build this into your week.

EATING FOR ENERGY

1. Start each day with a high-carbohydrate breakfast like porridge, cereal, toast, bananas, pasta or potatoes.
2. Eat high-protein foods like lean meat, chicken, eggs, milk and cheese at night.
3. Eat light meals, based on rice, pasta or bread (carbohydrates), that are easy to digest. (High-calorie or high-fat meals take longer to digest and may make you drowsy.)
4. Eat at the start of a break, then rest to allow digestion.
5. Snack on fresh fruit and milk products and avoid spicy and fried foods.
6. Limit coffee intake towards the end of your working day, and avoid it in the few hours before settling to sleep.
7. Have a high-carbohydrate snack straight after work (eg, after fencing, before riding your ATV home).
8. Reduce caffeine-added and sugary drinks.



DEHYDRATION EFFECTS AND SYMPTOMS

Dehydration Levels	% of Body Weight Lost	Fluid Loss in Lbs & Litres	How Soon Can This Happen	Effects & Symptoms
Minor	1%	1.5 lbs .75 litres	1 hour	Unnoticed
Initial Stage	2%	3.0 lbs 1.5 litres	2-3 hours	Loss of endurance, thirsty, feel hot, less comfortable
Performance Loss	3%	4.5 lbs 2.25 litres	3-4 hours	Loss of strength, energy, moderate discomfort
Heat Cramps	4%	6.0 lbs 3.0 litres	4-5 hours	Cramps, headaches, extreme discomfort
Heat Exhaustion	5%-6%	7.5-9 lbs 3.5-4 litres	5-6 hours	Heat exhaustion, nausea, faint
Heat Stroke	7%+	11+ lbs 5+ litres	7+ hours	Heat stroke, collapse, unconsciousness



→ Further resources for the farmer...

visit → www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention

or call → 0800 THINKSAFE (0800 844 657)

