




HOW WORKER FATIGUE CAN RUIN YOUR FARM

Don't Let Worker Fatigue Ruin Your Farm! Avoid accidents, injuries & plummeting profits. Discover how to keep your workers energised and your farm running smoothly.

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How worker fatigue can ruin your farm.

We've talked a bit about farm worker fatigue in a previous article. So, hopefully, now, you're at least aware of it.

But have you sat down and thought about how this could actually impact your farm if you don't take some steps to try and alleviate the problem?

Do you realise that if the problem continues untreated, it could end up ruining your farm?

While that might be the worst-case scenario, it's a real problem that does need to be addressed if you want your farm to continue to prosper into the future.

Let's take a closer look at the problem.

How worker fatigue can impact workers.

Studies have shown that the effects of fatigue can be as debilitating as the consumption of alcohol.

Seriously, think about that for a minute...

You'd never allow your workers to turn up to work drunk, would you?! If they did, you'd send them home straight away, wouldn't you?

Or you'd tell them to go and sleep it off, or get someone else to drive them home because you don't want them driving in that condition either.

You might even be tempted to sack them on the spot, honestly – turning up to work drunk is unacceptable.

So the symptoms of fatigue can be similar to when someone's drunk. Here's what this might look like:

- Slow reaction times
- Poor concentration

- Increased capacity for mistakes
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Headaches and dizziness
- Prone to micro-sleeps while on the job

There's no way known that you'd want your workers operating farm machinery when they have these symptoms, would you?

When workers are impaired due to fatigue, they can make mistakes and not be as careful or as accurate as they should be. This can be a huge problem, especially when they're working with heavy farm machinery or unpredictable livestock.

Accidents with farm machinery.

When workers are fatigued and not operating at peak performance, it's highly likely that accidents will occur.

What if those accidents happen when the worker is operating heavy farm machinery?

Serious accidents could easily result in permanent disablement or even death. And we don't have to tell you that that's something that you definitely don't want on your conscience.

Plus, your public liability insurance costs would go through the roof. Not to mention the toll this would take on your and your family's mental health.

Accidents on the road.

If your workers have to travel long distances back to their accommodation after a long day's work, there's a significantly increased chance that they'll be prone to having a car accident on the road.

We all know that driving while tired is one of the major causes of road accidents in Australia along with speeding. There are signs along every major highway in the country that tell us this, and we'd be blind not to see them.

Add to that the fact that your workers are heading home at dusk when visibility is low and the wildlife is active. Kangaroos can cause a lot of damage to vehicles as well as the driver and passengers.



Lack of vital medical assistance.

If you're on a rural or remote property, chances are that there's no emergency medical assistance nearby.

So, what happens if a serious accident does occur?

Waiting for medical assistance, such as the [Flying Doctor service](#), could result in a life-or-death situation when someone's been injured in a serious accident on your property.

Once again, this is not something that you want to have to deal with if you could avoid it.

How can these consequences potentially ruin your farm?

You've probably realised by now that if any one of these things happens on your property due to worker fatigue, it could easily ruin your farm.

Major accidents could result in extensive investigations that could take months to complete. This means that your operation could be under scrutiny and even your reputation at stake. Plus, you'll find it hard to concentrate on running your farm with all this hanging over your head.

You'd most likely be investigated by the [Worker's Compensation body](#) in your state and you could even face legal penalties if your case is serious enough.

And your insurance costs will go through the roof, or even worse, you might even find that no one's willing to sell you insurance.

Then there are other consequences to consider such as not being able to get anyone to work for you if your case has been [widely publicised](#).

While these situations look at the more dire consequences of having fatigued workers and you hope that they don't happen to you, other situations can arise that can be just as detrimental to the success of your enterprise.

If your workers are fatigued for much of the time, it's likely that your farm is not going to be running as efficiently as it could. This could mean that your production is down or that your harvest will not be completed on time.

Of course, this will have a negative effect on your bottom line and the profitability of your farm overall.

Now, we're not saying all of this to give you a scare or put undue pressure on you and your enterprise.

Thankfully, accidents don't happen every day, but they do happen periodically and it's better to be aware and prepared, than not.

In fact, by alerting you to what could possibly happen, we're doing you a favour by letting you know what the risks are and what you can do to alleviate some of those risks so the unforeseen doesn't happen to you.

Strategies for managing worker fatigue.

If you want to avoid the consequences resulting from fatigued workers, here are just a few strategies that you can use:

- Allow your workers to have at least one day off a fortnight and make sure that all workers take regular breaks. This should be part of your workplace health and safety plan.
- Ensure that your workers have adequate sleeping facilities such as [onsite accommodation](#). Adequate sleeping facilities should be away from noisy environments and provide comfort all year round, no matter the season or the outside temperatures.
- Limit each shift to 8 hours, and definitely a maximum of 12 hours. This might mean you'll have to take on additional staff or engage some seasonal workers during your busy times.
- Try to avoid having your workers operate machinery during what would normally be sleep hours. Everyone's body clock is different, but it does take a while for someone to adjust to working shifts that are not during their regular shift hours.

These are just some of the things that you can do to ensure that your workers don't suffer from fatigue on a regular basis.

Another thing that you could do is engage a Workplace Health and Safety consultant to come out and have a look at any improvements that you could make to ensure that you and your workers are as safe as they could be.


While there may be odd times during the year when longer hours are required, this shouldn't be the norm.

Remember that everyone works best when they've been able to have a great night's sleep and are alert and ready to get going the next morning.

When your farm workers are allowed enough rest after a hard day's work, you'll find that they'll be motivated and eager to get their jobs done.

And, because they're alert, they'll be less likely to make mistakes and your farm will run more efficiently than you ever thought possible.



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