
August 12, 2025

Emergency management – drought and wildfires in Ontario

Current situation

Ontario is facing prolonged high temperatures, limited rainfall, and increasing wildfire activity. These conditions create immediate and long-term risks for farmers, rural communities, and the province's agri-food sector. Both drought and wildfires affect water resources, crop production, livestock health, farm infrastructure, and farm businesses.

Drought impacts on agriculture

- **Water Availability:** Reduced water supply for irrigation, livestock watering, and on-farm processes.
- **Soil Health:** Low soil moisture leads to plant stress, reduced yields, and greater erosion risk.
- **Pasture & Feed Supply:** Slowed forage growth may lead to early pasture dormancy, affecting grazing and winter feed reserves.
- **Livestock Health & Productivity:** Heat stress lowers milk yield, weight gain, feed intake, and fertility; increased water demand can further strain supply.
- **Animal Welfare Concerns:** Overheated livestock require shade, ventilation, and frequent monitoring.
- **Financial Pressures:** Rising costs for supplemental feed, water hauling, and irrigation infrastructure.

Wildfire risks to farms

- **Human & Animal Safety:** Rapid evacuation of people and livestock may be necessary.
- **Smoke Exposure:** Poor air quality can cause respiratory stress in livestock and reduced feed intake.
- **Infrastructure Damage & Loss:** Fire damage to barns, fencing, equipment, and power lines disrupts farm processes, and animal care and containment.
- **Feed & Water Contamination:** Ash and fire retardants can contaminate feed supplies and surface water sources.
- **Transportation Limitations:** Road closures or reduced visibility can delay movement of feed, animals, and supplies.

Emergency preparedness for farmers

General Farm Readiness:

- Monitor weather alerts, wildfire maps, and drought updates.
- Keep insurance coverage up to date, including livestock and infrastructure.
- Maintain defensible space by clearing brush, debris, and combustible materials around farm buildings.

Water & Feed Management:

- Prioritize water use and secure alternative sources (wells, storage tanks, water-hauling plans).
- Test water quality if contamination from smoke or ash is possible.
- Stockpile feed and consider early hay purchases to avoid shortages.

Livestock Evacuation & Care:

- Identify multiple evacuation routes and safe holding locations for animals.
- Maintain an updated inventory of livestock (numbers, ID, and locations).
- Arrange pre-agreements with transporters for emergency moves.
- Ensure trailers, halters, panels, and handling equipment are in good repair.
- Train staff and family members on emergency livestock handling procedures.

Resources

OFA is committed to providing members with current information, practical guidance, and resource links to support risk reduction, preparedness, and recovery efforts.

- [Ontario Wildfire Map](#)
- [FireSmart Canada](#)
- [OMAFRA – Drought Management for Livestock](#)
- [Animal Health Canada Emergency Management](#)
- [Environment Canada – Weather Alerts](#)
- [Canadian Drought Monitor](#)
- [Canadian Animal Health Emergency Management \(CAHEM\)](#)
- [Farmer Wellness Initiative](#)

Contacts

OMAFRA General Support Information	1-877-424-1300
Beef Farmers of Ontario	519-824-0334
Ontario Sheep Farmers	519-836-0043
Veal Farmers of Ontario	519-824-2942
Ontario Pork	519-767-4600
Dairy Farmers of Ontario	905-821-8970