

GETTING SERIOUS WITH YOUR LIFESTYLE BLOCK

Guide Three



NEXT 15 YEARS

Brought to you by

FMG
Advice & Insurance

A woman in a dark vest and light-colored pants is leading a brown horse down a dirt path. The path is flanked by green grass and a wire fence. In the background, there are rolling green hills, a large tree, and a few cows grazing. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Taking your Lifestyle Block to the next level.

Are you thinking about the next step for your Lifestyle Block?

You may have had a few animals on your Block for a couple of years now. Or maybe you've been growing fruit and vegetables on a small scale. It's common for Lifestyle Block owners in this situation to start thinking about what's next, and that it's time to scale things up or make some new additions to the Block. This could include a desire to add more animals, crops, trees or buildings—and more often than not, more land.

A wealth of knowledge.

This next step will be different for everyone. But whatever you're planning, there are essential things to consider. That's why we've spoken to our network of experts and used our collective knowledge to create this guide—which aims to point out some of the opportunities and watch-outs when it comes to getting serious with your Lifestyle Block. There's advice on everything from adapting your land and tending animals, through to covering yourself against unforeseen liabilities.

We've been insuring people who live in rural New Zealand for over 115 years. At the same time, we've been completely immersed in the rural community, getting to know the people who live and work in the country. And it's these people who have helped us to put together this guide.

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Seizing opportunities.

We see many of our clients making use of their land and buildings to expand their Lifestyle Block operation.

There are plenty of ways to upscale your Lifestyle Block. This could include bringing on more (or different) animals, planting an orchard or starting a new business. For example, we've seen that beekeeping is becoming more and more popular. If the conditions suit, it can become a way to supplement your income and improve the pollination of your trees, as well as being a great hobby. You can easily take lessons to become a beekeeper at local beekeeping associations, meaning you'll be qualified to legally check your hives for diseases (which needs to be done by law).

If you're keen to get into beekeeping, it's worth checking out FMG's advice on Apiary Risks [here](#). You'll find lots of helpful information such as where to position your hives, as well as advice on topics such as fire risk, security and environmental protection.

It's not all about farming and growing.

Expanding your Lifestyle Block doesn't always have to be directly related to farming or horticulture though. For example, we see many people making use of their land and buildings to diversify by setting up workshops, retreats, health spas, B&B's and wedding venues. These come with their own risks, including potential health and safety considerations, so make sure this is thoroughly planned.

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Preparing your land.

Before you start getting more animals in or planting your crops, some Lifestyle Blocks may need considerable work.

Start by removing or repairing unwanted structures. Old fence posts, barbed wire and waratahs can be hazardous, puncturing tractor tyres and injuring livestock, so walk around your property noting what needs to be cleared.

The seeds from weeds can last in the ground for over 50 years without germinating, so it's often a matter of managing them with a regular control programme. Just bear in mind that harmful sprays should never be used around waterways or livestock. Organic sprays are available too, so talk to your local Farmlands or rural supply store about your options.

Different classes of animals can help by eating weeds—calves will like nice new shoots whereas cows and bulls will eat most green plants. Goats will eat prickly blackberry but generally after any better options are eaten, so make sure your fencing is up to scratch! Note that some weeds can be toxic to livestock, so do your homework first. A good place to start is Totally Vets' list of some of the most commonly encountered poisonous plants for livestock and companion animals—which you can find [here](#).

Have a chat with the council.

If you're planning to build a glasshouse or polyhouse, you may need consent. Talk to the [local council](#) about that before you get too far down the track. It's also worth checking how close you can erect these structures to your boundaries. With some councils, there's a 25 metre set back which can have an impact on where you can build.

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Some tips on animals.

The more animals you bring onto your property, the more responsibilities you'll have.



Fencing

Good fences make good neighbours, so knowing how to build and maintain fences is an essential skill. Getting fencing right will also help minimise a lot of the risks to your livestock.

Here are some important points to remember.

- Ensure your boundary fencing complies with the Fencing Act 1978 and that any other fencing you build is appropriate for its purpose.
- Remember to check fencing regularly to ensure that stock can't escape, especially after a storm. Broken battens, popped staples and loose wires are key things to watch out for.
- If livestock escape as a result of poorly maintained fences, you could be legally responsible to pay for any damage they cause—and the damage can be significant if a vehicle travelling at speed on a back road hits your livestock.
- It always pays to talk to your neighbours before building any boundary fence you'll be sharing.

Bear in mind, fencing isn't always about keeping your animals inside your property and you may also need internal fencing. If you're bringing cows onto your land for example, you'll either need to build new fences or buy portable electric fences to keep them in the right areas.



Tending

You also need to consider who will tend to your animals if you're on holiday, to ensure that they're well looked after while you're away. The [Animal Welfare Act](#) has information about meeting the needs of animals and it sets out the obligations of people in charge of animals, including providing:

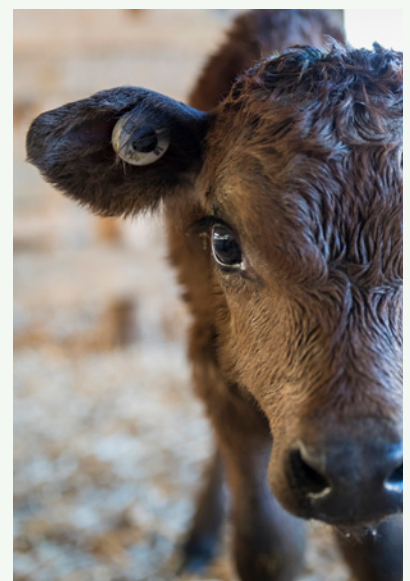
- proper and sufficient food and water
- adequate shelter
- the opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour
- appropriate physical handling
- protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, injury and disease.

If you have any questions or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to a local stock agent for advice. They'll be able to tell you all you need to know, from the feed your animals may need and when they need drenching to when they need to go to the works or be sold.



Identification and tracing

If you have (or plan to have) cattle or deer on your Block, it's important that you register them and your property in the NAIT online system, otherwise you could be fined. Whether you have a dozen animals or even just one, as a PICA (person in charge of animals) you're legally obligated to register with NAIT and keep your account and contact details up to date. Other responsibilities include recording any animal movements to and from your location within 48 hours and recording all deaths on your Block including home kills. For more information on your NAIT requirements, click [here](#).



A woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue jacket, is kneeling and examining the lower leg of a brown horse. The horse is standing in a stable, and its body fills the upper half of the frame. The woman is looking down at her hands, which are resting on the horse's leg. The background is slightly blurred, showing the interior of a stable.

Animal health and a good vet.

We know that your animals and their health are important to you. It's also essential to understand the responsibilities that come with their care.

We recommend you find a vet that specialises in your types of animals—for example, for cattle you'll need a large animal vet.

Find the right vet.

For Lifestyle Block owners close to the main cities, you will need to do some research to identify a large animal vet in the area. Your vet will tell you that there are two key issues for animal health.

As Chris Carter from Totally Vets points out,

“One is preventing diseases, and for this, you need to put some programmes in place. That means scheduling vaccinations that are required for good animal health, such as salmonella and clostridial vaccinations. It means preventative treatments for sheep that are susceptible to fly strike and taking care of goats that are susceptible to foot problems. And for both sheep and goats, regular drenching is also required.”

“The other aspect is what we call ambulatory work, or treatments when disease occurs. This could be needed, for example, if you haven't been on top of your preventative programmes for facial eczema and your sheep, goats or cows start to develop clinical eczema. Or if you haven't kept up to date with parasite control and you get animals with scours or your lambs start dying from Barber's Pole worm infestation.”

If you don't get the prevention side of things right, you can end up needing professional help (i.e. calling your vet) to get your animals out of trouble, or worse, not meeting your obligations under the Animal Welfare Act. Prevention is always better (and cheaper) than curing and it also prevents the heartache of dealing with sick animals.

What sort of infrastructure is in place?

If you're thinking of increasing your livestock numbers or growing something new, you need to be sure you have the right infrastructure to take care of them properly.

Whether we're talking horses, sheep, goats or cattle, you need to address your fencing and water supply. With cattle and sheep, you may also need handling facilities such as a small yard, loading chute and a loading dock to make getting your animals on and off a trailer or a truck easier. For sheep shearing and dagging, you'll also need to look at holding pens.

A good water supply is especially important if you're planning on planting an orchard or crops. You'll also need to consider storage tanks close to your orchard and water conservation if you rely on rain water, and whether there will be any issues with run-off.

Safety is a big priority.

When expanding your Lifestyle Block, health and safety is a key consideration. This is especially important if you are operating a business and any employees or contractors become involved with hazards such as machinery and chemical storage.

It's good practice to have a health and safety management system in place. This doesn't need to be too complex, WorkSafe recommends you at least:

1. Identify existing and potential hazards
2. Put controls in place to manage hazards:
 - If you can, eliminate them (such as replacing toxic chemicals with non-toxic options)
 - If you can't eliminate it, isolate it (such as fitting protective guards on machinery)
 - If you can't do either, minimise it (such as protective gear and signage)
3. If you can only minimise a hazard, ensure you monitor it.



For more information in this area, visit [WorkSafe's website.](#)



Keeping thieves at bay.



As a Lifestyle Block owner you're often away from your property which, unfortunately, provides an opportunity for thieves. This risk increases as you purchase more assets for your Block.

In general, it's always a good idea to keep in touch with your neighbours because if they've suffered a burglary recently, your chances of being burgled in the near future increase dramatically.

Also make sure you're not giving away key information on Facebook. Posting photos of your holiday is a clear message to thieves that your place is empty. With that in mind, it's worth checking your Facebook security settings to ensure only your friends can view your posts.

Fuel theft.

As fuel prices rise and your Lifestyle Block expands, a common target is your petrol or diesel. So here's what we recommend as a deterrent:

- Make sure your fuel tanks are secured and locked.
- Install sensor lighting to light up tanks and fuelling areas at night.
- Keep an inventory of fuel consumption so thefts can be identified quickly.
- Park your vehicles with the fuel caps close to the shed wall or another vehicle to restrict access to the fuel tank.

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Livestock theft.

Unfortunately, having your animals go missing happens more often than you'd think. Here are a few tips to help.

- Put padlocks on gates.
- Fit capping hinges so gates can't be easily removed.
- Regularly check paddocks where stock is grazing.
- If you're not around for a while, ask a neighbour to check on the animals for you.

If you hear about unregulated killing and sale of meat, you can confidentially call the MPI Foodline on 0800 693 721.

Contact the Police immediately if you discover any items have been stolen—remember to always put your personal safety first and dial 111 if you need immediate assistance. Otherwise you're best to call 105 for non-emergencies or your local Police station.



Investigate, investigate, investigate.

Do your research and find out what works for you.

It might sound obvious, but the more planning and research you do, the better. Then apply your findings to your particular situation. Not all Lifestyle Blocks are the same and everyone has a different goal. Also remember that not all great ideas will be a guaranteed success and you might find along the way that you need to do things differently. This isn't a bad thing as long as you have a plan and you're able to adapt it as you go.

Before you start, Bill Milham from Property Brokers points out that it's good to make sure you do your due diligence on what

you can do on your property. "Check if there are covenants, if you can subdivide, and if there are easements such as a shared driveway. There may even be restrictions on leasing out spare land for grazing."

Talk to the right people.

There are many resources available to tap into for various topics. Just by having a chat with the right people you can pick up some great pieces of advice. Online forums such as on lifestyleblock.co.nz are a great place to start and people are always willing to help—so don't be afraid to ask.

Other Lifestyle Block owners in your area can be another great resource. For example, if you're thinking of putting fruit trees in, but you're not sure what's best, it might be worth asking others in your area. You may also find wild apple or plum trees growing near your property, which is a good sign that they're well suited to the local climate or soil type.

*Apply your findings to
your particular situation.
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are the same, and
everyone has a
different goal.*



Why rural insurance is so essential.

The biggest area you need to be covered for is liability.

Many people assume that their domestic liability will cover them, but it simply won't. In the country, there are all kinds of things you can be liable for if you don't have the right liability cover.

Covering what you're liable for.

You need to be covered in case your stock (cows in particular) wander onto the road and cause accidents. Animals can also get out and trample the neighbour's crops.

You'll need to be covered for statutory liability, which covers breaches of legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act or the Resource Management Act. For example, if a council drain runs through your property, you could be liable for polluting the water.

It's not uncommon to have a fire to burn off tree trimmings. If the fire gets out of control and damages your neighbouring property (which could be buildings or trees), you're liable. Even worse, you could set fire to a forestry block or native reserve—and you don't want to be liable for that!

Spraying weeds in your paddock might seem like a good idea until it drifts onto your neighbour's grapes or their organic orchard and destroys their season's harvest.

If power poles or lines are on your property, you could be liable for damage, regardless of whether it was you who damaged them or not. FMG provides a Liability Cover that can protect you against these unique, but only too real risks.

Covering your rural possessions.

A farm contents policy is also vital to cover those items you're not likely to have in the city. Things like electric fence units, bailed hay, fertiliser sprayers, chemicals, brush cutters and portable pumps.

And if you have farm vehicles on your property, it's likely they won't be covered on a standard vehicle policy. FMG has a special farm vehicles policy for things like quad bikes, trailers, fert spreaders, tractors, any tractor attachments, and dirt bikes.

The best way to find out the kind of cover you're likely to need is to call us on 0800 366 466 and have a chat or contact us via fmg.co.nz/lifestyle. We'll talk you through everything you need to know.



Here are a few good places to go for more advice.

lifestyleblock.co.nz


farmlands.co.nz

fmg.co.nz/lifestyle

fmg.co.nz/advice

ospri.co.nz/nait

FMG
Advice & Insurance

 0800 366 466

 contact@fmg.co.nz

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