

Millennium Farm Trust
GV10 Business Continuity Policy V04

Next review date: April 2028



Version Control

Version number	Date of changes	Who	Review summary
02	April 2021	T Freathy	Scheduled review. Checked Nowton Park emergency location. Added pandemic references.
03	April 2024	T Freathy	Scheduled review. Changed emergency location, removed covid references – though kept annex as it relates to other pandemics.
04	May 2026	T Freathy	Revision following best practice review

Review frequency: Every two years, or following a significant incident or material change in operations

1. Purpose

Millennium Farm Trust (MFT) recognises that unexpected events may disrupt the operation of Depden Care Farm. These might include:

- fire, flood or serious damage to buildings;
- loss of access to the farm;
- animal disease restrictions;
- significant loss of utilities or IT systems;
- unusually high levels of staff absence;
- severe weather;
- a major infectious disease outbreak or pandemic; or
- any other incident which significantly affects our ability to operate safely.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a simple framework which enables MFT to:

- protect the safety and welfare of farm helpers, staff, volunteers and visitors;

- safeguard the welfare of animals;
- maintain essential services wherever it is safe and practicable to do so;
- communicate effectively with those affected;
- protect essential organisational information and assets; and
- return to normal operation as quickly and safely as possible.

Our priorities during any significant disruption will be:

People → Animals → Essential services → Property and information → Recovery.

2. Activating the Business Continuity Plan

The plan may be activated by the Director or, in their absence, the Farm Operations Manager or a Trustee.

The person taking the lead will assess:

- the immediate risks to people and animals;
- whether the farm can continue to operate safely;
- the likely duration and impact of the disruption;
- which activities must continue;
- which activities can be reduced, relocated or suspended; and
- who needs to be informed.

The response should be proportionate to the incident. A short-term power cut, for example, will not require the same response as a major fire or prolonged loss of access to the farm.

Where appropriate, the emergency services, insurers, commissioners, local authorities, landlords or other relevant organisations will be contacted.

3. Immediate Response

The first priority in any incident is the safety and welfare of people and animals.

Depending upon the nature of the incident, action may include:

- evacuating or closing all or part of the site;
- calling the emergency services;
- providing first aid;
- accounting for farm helpers, staff, volunteers and visitors;
- ensuring farm helpers can return home safely;
- securing buildings, equipment and other assets;
- making immediate arrangements for animal care;

- recording significant incidents, injuries and decisions;
- making any required statutory notifications; and
- informing relevant staff, Trustees, farm helpers and their support networks.

The Director or person leading the response will establish who is responsible for coordinating subsequent action and communication.

4. Maintaining Essential Operations

Following the immediate response, MFT will determine which activities need to continue and how these can be delivered safely.

4.1 Farm Helper Provision

Our principal service is the provision of safe, meaningful farm-based activity for farm helpers.

Where disruption is expected to last for no more than 48 hours, it may be appropriate simply to cancel provision.

For longer disruption, MFT will consider whether provision can:

- continue safely on part of the existing site;
- operate at reduced capacity;
- be delivered from alternative buildings;
- be temporarily relocated to another suitable site; or
- be suspended where safe alternative provision is not practicable.

Staffing levels and appropriate support arrangements must continue to meet the needs of those attending.

Farm helpers, families, carers and other support networks will be informed promptly of significant changes to provision.

Commissioners and other relevant organisations will be informed where disruption materially affects commissioned services.

4.2 Animals and Farm

Animal welfare remains an essential activity even if farm-helper provision is suspended.

The Director/Farm Operations Manager will ensure that arrangements remain in place for:

- feeding, watering and routine care;
- veterinary treatment where required;
- safe housing;
- access to essential feed, bedding and supplies; and
- emergency relocation of animals where they cannot safely remain on site.

Where necessary, staff or other competent people will undertake animal-care duties normally carried out with farm helpers.

If animals need to be relocated, appropriate local contacts, including the Suffolk Smallholders Society where applicable, may be approached for assistance.

Routine grounds maintenance, horticultural activity, external contract work, training and other non-essential activity may be reduced or suspended during a significant disruption.

4.3 Staffing

Where staff absence or disruption affects normal staffing arrangements, MFT will:

- prioritise staff resources towards essential activities;
- ensure safe staffing and support levels are maintained;
- temporarily reallocate responsibilities where appropriate;
- reduce or suspend non-essential activities; and
- consider appropriate external or temporary support where necessary.

If safe staffing cannot be maintained, service provision will be reduced or suspended.

5. Alternative Premises

If Depden Care Farm cannot safely be used, MFT may temporarily relocate some or all service provision.

Potential alternative premises include:

The Erskine Centre

Chevington Road

Chedburgh

IP29 4UL

Email: ErskineCentreEnquiries@gmail.com

Contact: Angie Barnetson (Committee Member) – 07875 605165

Hargrave Village Hall

Bury Road

Hargrave

IP29 5HP

Bookings: Jill – 01284 850286

Use of either venue will depend upon availability and suitability at the time.

Before relocating provision, MFT will consider:

- the needs and safety of the farm helpers concerned;
- accessibility;
- staffing and supervision;
- safeguarding;
- transport;

- suitable activities;
- toilets and welfare facilities;
- emergency arrangements; and
- any venue-specific risk assessment required.

Depending upon circumstances, MFT may use different premises on different days or operate a reduced service.

The suitability of alternative premises and their contact details will be checked as part of the periodic review of this policy.

6. Communication

Clear and timely communication is particularly important during disruption.

Depending upon the nature of the incident, those requiring information may include:

- farm helpers;
- parents, carers and support providers;
- staff and volunteers;
- Trustees;
- commissioners and local authorities;
- the landlord;
- insurers;
- emergency services;
- suppliers and contractors; and
- other relevant stakeholders.

One person should, wherever practicable, coordinate significant external communications to ensure information is accurate and consistent.

Information provided should explain what has happened, what arrangements are currently in place and when further information can be expected.

7. Essential Information and IT

MFT will ensure that essential organisational information can be accessed by appropriate people if normal access to the farm or its IT equipment is disrupted.

This will include access, as appropriate, to:

- staff and Trustee contact information;
- farm-helper and emergency contact information;
- insurance details;
- landlord details;

- commissioner and local authority contacts;
- key suppliers and contractors;
- key-holder information;
- essential policies and organisational records; and
- information necessary to access essential IT and communication systems.

Essential records will be maintained securely using appropriate cloud-based or off-site systems.

Passwords and other sensitive access credentials must be stored securely and must not be included in printed copies of this policy.

MFT will not maintain a separate physical 'disaster recovery pack' provided that the information required to respond to an incident remains securely accessible to the appropriate people.

8. Financial and Administrative Continuity

During a significant disruption, MFT will seek to maintain essential administrative and financial functions, including:

- payroll;
- banking and payments;
- essential purchasing;
- invoicing and income collection;
- insurance notifications and claims; and
- communication with commissioners and funders.

Where disruption significantly affects service delivery or income, the Director and Trustees will consider appropriate action with commissioners, funders and insurers.

Non-essential administrative activity may be postponed.

9. Infectious Disease or Pandemic

An infectious disease outbreak or pandemic may require changes to staffing, attendance or normal working arrangements.

MFT will follow applicable Government, UK Health Security Agency, NHS and local authority guidance.

A specific risk assessment and operating arrangements will be developed where necessary, taking account of the nature of the infection and the guidance in force at the time.

This policy does not prescribe infection-control measures for a future outbreak, as the appropriate controls will depend upon the circumstances and public-health guidance applicable at that time.

10. Recovery

Once the immediate disruption has been controlled, the Director or person leading the response will coordinate the return to normal operations.

This may involve a phased return where appropriate.

Priority will be given to:

- restoring normal farm-helper provision;
- maintaining animal welfare;
- restoring buildings, utilities, IT and equipment;
- returning staff to normal responsibilities;
- communicating changes to those affected; and
- resolving outstanding financial, insurance or contractual matters.

Following a significant incident, MFT will review what happened and identify any lessons or improvements required.

Significant decisions, expenditure and actions taken during a major disruption should be recorded.

11. Review and Testing

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following:

- a significant business continuity incident;
- a major change to MFT's premises or operations;
- a significant change to commissioned services; or
- evidence that the existing arrangements are no longer effective.

Review will include checking that:

- key contact arrangements remain current;
- alternative premises remain potentially available;
- essential records can be accessed away from the farm; and
- responsibilities for responding to a significant disruption are understood.

MFT will use proportionate discussion or scenario testing to check that its arrangements remain workable. A formal business continuity exercise is not required unless the level of risk or commissioning requirements make one appropriate.

QUICK RESPONSE GUIDE

If a serious disruption occurs:

1. PEOPLE

Is everyone safe? Evacuate, provide first aid and contact emergency services where required.

2. ANIMALS

Are the animals safe and who will provide their immediate care?

3. ASSESS

Can the farm operate safely? For how long is disruption likely? What must stop and what must continue?

4. LEAD

Confirm who is coordinating the response and who is making operational decisions.

5. COMMUNICATE

Inform staff, farm helpers/support networks and, where appropriate, Trustees, commissioners, insurers, landlord and other relevant organisations.

6. CONTINUE OR RELOCATE

Decide whether to operate normally, reduce provision, close temporarily or use alternative premises.

7. RECORD

Keep a proportionate record of significant decisions, actions, incidents and expenditure.

8. RECOVER

Return to normal operation as soon as it is safe and practical to do so, and review what was learned.

Annex A

Critical Activity: Provision of services to farm helpers

Provide a safe and secure environment; staff ratios maintained; maintain registers and records

Disruption duration	Impacts (Internal and external)	Expected mitigating actions
Up to 48hours	Services cancelled. Unable to receive farm helpers at farm or HQ. Farm helpers may have to leave	Telephone farm helpers/support networks Cancel provision for up to 2 days. If over 2 days, use other site or use other buildings
Up to 1 week	Services cancelled or limited.	Telephone farm helpers/support networks Communicate with wider support networks eg volunteers Use another site Use other buildings
Over 1 week	Temporary re allocation of staff Services relocated Additional transport costs (staff and farm helpers)	Use another site eg local village hall Use other buildings eg workshop or temporary building

	Negotiate with funders to maintain income Apply for all available grants and emergency funding	
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Examples of non-critical activities

External contract work, staff recruitment and training,

Critical Activity: Farm and Garden

Provide care for animals; maintain crops;

Disruption duration	Impacts (Internal and external)	Expected mitigating actions
Up to 48hours	Farm helpers unable to look after animals Inadequate housing for animals	Arrange for Director/ staff to look after animals Rehouse animals off site.
Up to 1 week	Farm helpers unable to look after animals Inadequate housing for animals	Arrange for Director/ staff to look after animals Rehouse animals off site. (via Suffolk Smallholders Society)
Over 1 week	Farm helpers unable to look after animals Inadequate housing for animals	Arrange for Director/ staff to look after animals Rehouse animals off site. (via Suffolk Smallholders Society)

Examples of non-critical activities

Routine farm/garden maintenance, staff recruitment and training, animal trade,