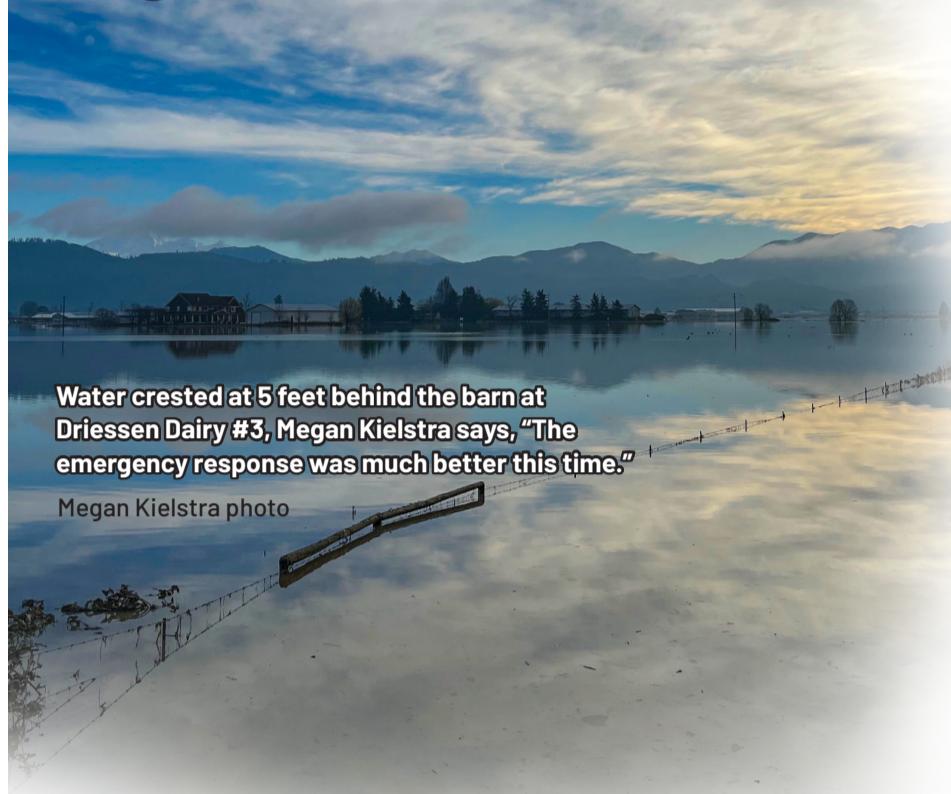


Flood Fatigue:

Farmers Call for Long-Term Solutions Again...



Water crested at 5 feet behind the barn at Driessen Dairy #3, Megan Kielstra says, "The emergency response was much better this time."

Megan Kielstra photo

Morgan Sangster, Producer Support Manager, BC Dairy

Tars Cheema & Amanda Poelman

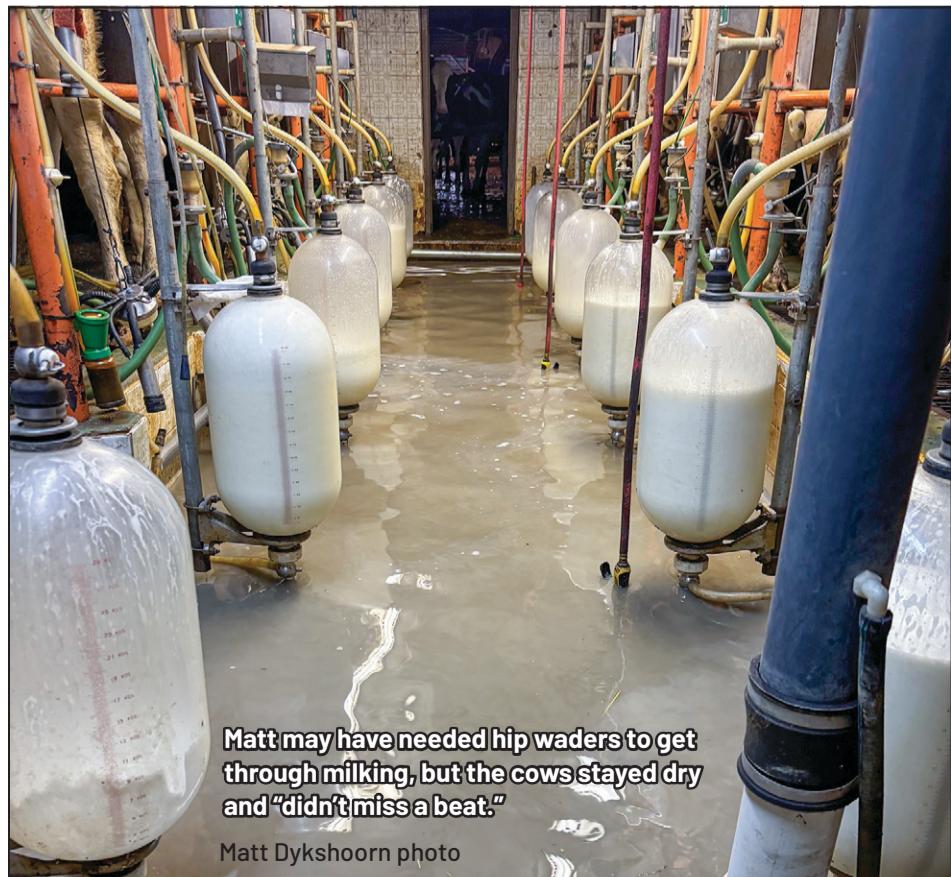
The Sumas Prairie experienced déjà vu the second week in December as heavy rains fell. While not as distressing as the events of 2021, many producers still experienced palpable tensions with anxiety rising along with the water.

Rudi Meier - U&D Meier Dairy, South Parallel Rd.

Rudi Meier, who farms across from the #1 Hwy with his twin brother Karl, is still worn from the intense six weeks – and it's far from over. "December is usually a recharge month for us – getting ready for Christmas with our families – but all we did was keep pumps going while we worried about the water and watched where it

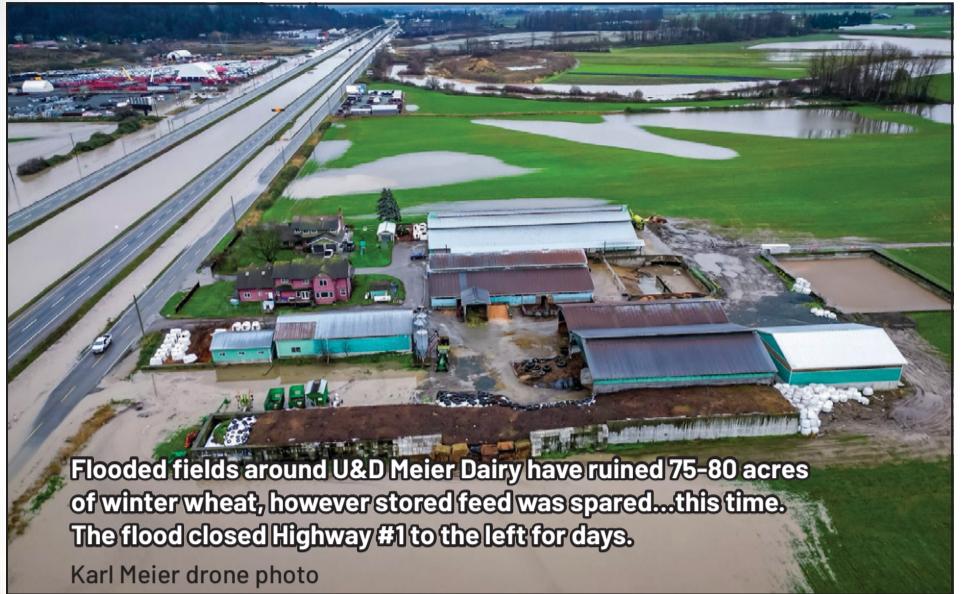
might go." Initially, they had six pumps going for 72 hours, then three going for another week, the two pumps in their basements for three more weeks. Dehumidifiers are still going. They have a lot more cleaning and disinfecting to do through their crawlspaces.

They had to relocate their five-month-old and younger heifers to Postmas as the water came up two feet in 20 minutes in the driveway. Rudi is thankful the water did not reach the bunkers and ruin stored feed like in 2021, but the flooded fields will cost them plenty. 75-80 acres of winter wheat was well on its way but it's a total write-off now. Meanwhile, the fertilizer, seed and labour are a loss.



Matt may have needed hip waders to get through milking, but the cows stayed dry and "didn't miss a beat."

Matt Dykshoorn photo



Flooded fields around U&D Meier Dairy have ruined 75-80 acres of winter wheat, however stored feed was spared...this time. The flood closed Highway #1 to the left for days.

Karl Meier drone photo

Megan Kielstra - Driessen Dairy #3, South Parallel Rd.

"We had significantly less water than in 2021," says Megan, "There was about 6-8 inches at the road, and we had about 2.5 ft in the bunker, which is the lowest part of the yard." She also notes, "By the time the US water came across the border, most of the rainwater had already drained."

Although water flowed up through the manure alley, the Kielstras were able to shuffle around their youngstock, making offsite relocation of animals unnecessary. Due to full access to Sumas Way, milk was able to be picked up as usual, with no loads needing to be dumped.

The emergency response of local authorities and BC Dairy was positive. "Last time was really hard," said Megan, "but this time the police had more awareness of what was needed and were much more accommodating when we pulled up to the barricade to get to the farm." She credits this in large part to the response of BC Dairy, which served as a buffer between producers and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). "Morgan (BC Dairy) was organized with checklists of things to consider that may have slipped our minds, and that was really helpful."

Although the Kielstras made some improvements to their manure storage since 2021 to avoid having manure water running through the yard, Megan says, "We learned in 2021 exactly where the water would go, which allowed us to move our animals accordingly as needed." She adds, "You can't truly stop the water – it always finds a way."

Matt Dykshoorn - B&L Dairy, Kenny Rd.

"We were as well-prepared as we could be," says Matt, who experienced up to 5ft of water during the December flood – 2ft less than he contended with in 2021. "Thursday morning (Dec 11) our road was dry. At 2pm the water came over the tracks in five or six different places – rising quickly and by 5pm we were under water." Matt was prepared and evacuated 40 heifers because if the water gets to his barn, that means Kenny Road already has 5 ft of water and evacuation is impossible.

Barn alleys filled quickly, but despite walking through water to get to the feed bunk and the parlour, their bedding stayed dry thanks to the 8-inch curb. Thankfully, B&L Dairy only had to dump their milk on Saturday while the road was submerged. "It was a calculated gamble not moving the cows, but it paid off!"

"We double-fed everything Thursday morning, so they would have enough feed for 48 hours and filled the silage wagon with sawdust so that we could refill the bedding immediately when it was safe to go back to the barn." Using the largest tractor he has, Matt was able to get back to the bunker by Saturday afternoon. "We lost about 1ft of face off the bunker and some of the plastic washed up slightly on our sealed bunkers," he says, estimating about 50 tons of loss. All the grass and cover crop was under water, but Matt is optimistic, saying, "The

fields look pretty good all things considered. I think we should only lose about 10-15 acres of feed," a sharp contrast to the 100 acres he lost in 2021.

Matt agrees that the response of the authorities and BC Dairy showed great improvement this time around. "The emergency command that BC Dairy has built has paid dividends," he says. "EOC doesn't have people everywhere all the time, so sharing information instead of operating separately is important. I can't say enough about the work BC Dairy has done to foster relationships."

While preparedness is important, Matt, like many producers, believes that ultimately prevention is the answer. "We need to get in front of this. We can handle 6 inches of rain in a weekend, but the problem comes when the major rivers keep spilling over." In the meantime, having a plan in place and monitoring the warning signs is paramount. Matt speaks highly of the dairy community and its willingness to help, "In 2021 I made one call and an hour later I had 15 trailers on the farm ready to move animals," he says, and despite not needing that kind of help this time, it's comforting to know that safety net is available.

The BC Dairy Perspective

Although a very unfortunate event, BC Dairy feels the 2025 flood event demonstrated significant progress in our organization's emergency response coordination. During this event, BC Dairy was able to virtually attend the Abbotsford EOC meetings twice daily, as well as the daily PREOC weather calls. The Ministry of Agriculture and EMCR staff within the EOC enabled proactive two-way communications with both local and provincial authorities, as well as BC Dairy. Maintaining direct communication with impacted producers was prioritized – we wanted to ensure a constant flow of intel to and from the EOC. Producers provided real time updates for the situation on the ground, which not only benefited the EOC, but in turn also improved access which was a large issue in 2021. This level of open communication was integral to facilitating the movement of milk and feed, and ensuring our producers needs were met during this difficult time. Overall, the 2025 flood response reinforced the importance of real-time intelligence, coordinated planning, and the need to continue advocating for investment in infrastructure and preparedness.

Farmers are resilient, but the mental health toll can't be ignored. The trauma of 2021 is still fresh, and many are now facing a second flood. Beyond recovery, pressure is mounting for real, long-term solutions – farmers can only do so much to protect their homes and facilities. Fatigue is setting in, Rudi says.

Politics aside, all players must work together to address flood risks. Urgent action is needed, and we can't keep spending millions on disaster relief and short-term band-aids.