

Winnowing

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Over the last months, farming families have taken another body blow to maintaining life on the farm. With a lone cow in the west diagnosed with BSE, markets crashed, prices plummeted and farmers were stranded with ready-to-market cattle. The impact has not been for cattle farmers alone; sheep and dairy farmers, truckers, sales yards, butchers, processors have joined the host of those injured. Amid the calls for help and the demands for support, no simple response answers the need, no comprehensive plan has been invented to address the concerns. The frustration and anguish of farming families continue to mount.

In these times, there are no adequate words;

in these times, available resources never stretch far enough;

in these times, creative ideas and great wisdom fall short.

People hurt; families struggle.

Even so, it may be possible, in small, simple ways to lighten one corner of the world, to find small acts of compassion which will offer a glimmer of light:

Buy meat directly from the farm gate. And don't expect a bargain. Farm costs have remained the same, even if the market price has slumped.

Throw a beef supper for the neighbourhood.

Invite a politician to tea and express both your concern for the present farm realities and your support of government attempts to respond. (You could suggest that more would be better.)

Drop an "I'm thinking of you" note in your farming neighbours' mailbox. Let them know you are aware; let them know you care. (Including a gift certificate for a nearby restaurant would be a loving gesture.)

Ask your local farm organizations how you can help.

Make certain your kitchen outreach cupboard is full and easily accessed.

Watch for signs of stress and depression. Respond with information on where to get help locally, i.e. the contact names and numbers of helping agencies.