Improving the quality of your sleep

Research shows that making some simple changes to your sleeping environment, lifestyle and way of thinking about sleep can make a big difference to your life. Here are some ideas you may like to try…

Adjusting your environment:

- **Remove any clocks** that are visible from your bed (knowing the time and/or being tempted to check it is likely to wake you up and make you more worried about not being asleep)
- Minimise the amount of light and noise in your bedroom (consider buying new blinds and/or using an eye mask and ear plugs)
- Ensure your bedroom is the right **temperature** (consider using another blanket, opening a window, turning on a fan if necessary)
- Ensure you have a comfortable pillow and perhaps think about seeing your GP, a physiotherapist or chiropractor if pain is keeping you awake
- If possible, move dogs, chooks and other noisy livestock further away from the house to minimise the chances of your sleep being interrupted by animal noises

Adjust your SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT

Adjusting your thinking:

- Many people find themselves lying awake in bed at night which is frustrating. While this may be caused by quite legitimate concerns about your farm or family for example, it often turns into worry about not sleeping, which makes it more difficult to get to sleep. A better alternative is to **get out of bed** and do something relaxing such as reading a book, listening to some music or having a glass of water, and **only go back to bed when you feel like you cannot keep your eyes open** and are ready to sleep
- Alternatively, get out of bed, and deliberately pay attention to the thoughts that show up in your mind and feelings that show up in your body. If the thoughts are things you can do something about, write a note to yourself to remind you to deal with them in the morning. If the thoughts are about things you cannot solve, try to let them go. You will learn more about this technique and have the opportunity to practice it in the ifarmwell modules

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Adjusting your behaviour/lifestyle:

- Avoid doing things other than sleeping (like watching TV, working or reading) in bed and only go to bed when you feel sleepy. This means that when you put your head on your pillow, your body will be better trained to associate that with going to sleep
- Increase the amount of **exercise** you do throughout the day (but not straight before bed)
- Avoid heavy meals, caffeine (coke, coffee, tea), nicotine (cigarettes) and sugar for a few hours before bedtime
- **Avoid alcohol** (although it might make you get to sleep more quickly, it compromises the quality of your sleep in the second half of the night and as the effects wear off, is likely to wake you up, make you need to go to the toilet and need a drink of water)
- If possible, deal with upsetting or worrying things and do your problem solving early in the day. Plan to do more **relaxing activities in the evening** so that upsetting issues are not fresh in your mind at bedtime
- **Get out of bed at a similar time each day** and if possible, expose yourself to some **sunlight** in the morning
- Develop some **pre-bedtime rituals** such as doing breathing exercises or relaxing stretches for 15 minutes before bed, to help remind your body that it is almost time to sleep
- **Avoid naps** during the day so you feel more sleepy at night
- Keep track of your sleeping habits (time went to bed, how long it took to get to sleep, time woken, how refreshed you felt) and pre-bedtime activities for a couple of weeks to assist in identifying the factors that may be having an impact on the quality of your sleep. When you have done this for a week or so, look for patterns in when you do and do not sleep well and adjust your sleeping environment and behaviour accordingly

We suggest you select 3 or 4 of the strategies above and experiment to find out whether or not they improve the quality of your sleep.

After a couple of weeks, if you have not noticed any changes, try 3 or 4 other strategies.

Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.

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