Supporting Farmers & Ranchers in Stress

Kansas Ag Growth Summit
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Meg Moynihan
Providing Kansans the resources they need to help cope with ag-related stress.

Kansas farmers, ranchers and their families are the backbone of this state, providing us with high-quality crops, livestock and dairy products. Unfortunately, the stress that comes with those responsibilities can be overwhelming. Unpredictable weather, heavy workloads and financial worries can sometimes take their toll on farm families and lead to mental and emotional distress, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and even suicide. Caring for your own health and wellness in this high-stress profession is often overlooked but is just as critical as caring for your farm business.

Resources compiled on this website can help care for and assist Kansas farmers and ranchers in their well-being. You’ll find help with stress management, financial and legal challenges, and many other needs. As more tools are developed, this website will be updated and serve as a hub of current information and resources.

If you are a farmer in crisis, or know of someone in need of immediate assistance, contact your local Kansas Community Mental Health Center or call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-8255.

Business Assistance
Disaster Assistance
Financial Counseling
Legal Assistance
Mental Health Counseling
Substance Abuse

Kansas Rural Family Helpline
866-327-6578

Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services
Coronavirus Forces Farmers to Destroy Their Crops

Dumped Milk, Smashed Eggs, Plowed Vegetables: Food Waste of the Pandemic

With restaurants, hotels and schools closed, many of the nation's largest dairy farmers are dumping millions of gallons of milk as demand for the product has dropped and storage tanks fill up.

Dairy farmers dumping milk amid COVID-19: Pandemic's impact on the dairy industry
Consider these inherent challenges

- Farmers work where they live
- Coworkers can be mostly family
- Multiple roles
- Competition and envy
- Loss of peers/community
- Praise/blame whipsaw
What Happens?

• Sleep disturbance
• Weight loss/gain
• Hygiene
• GI problems
• Irritability
• Withdrawal

• Depression
• Anxiety
• Substance overuse
• Relationship problems
• Paralysis/inability to make decisions
Yearly suicide rates - farm residents

(E. Zabel et al.)
Why Don’t More Farmers Seek Help?

• I should be able to handle this myself.
• Where would I go?
• They wouldn’t understand.
• Other people would find out.
• Costs too much.
• I don’t have time.
• Nobody can fix what’s wrong.
Dedicated Farmer Counselors/Therapists

Monica McConkey
218-280-7785

Ted Matthews
320-266-2390

• Meet 1:1 with farmers, farm families
• No insurance; no paperwork
• No charge: funded by MN Legislature ($238K/yr)
24/7 Confidential Hotline

MINNESOTA FARM & RURAL HELPLINE
minnesotafarmstress.com

CALL 833-600-2670
TEXT farmstress to 898211
EMAIL farmstress@state.mn.us

Need help finding a confidential financial or legal advisor? Feeling worried or blue and need a listening ear? 24/7
Minnesota Farm Advocates

• Since 1984
• Peer farmers
• Natural or financial disaster
• In the farmer’s corner
• Help navigate solutions to difficult and complex problems
  • Lending/lender negotiation, mediation, farm programs, crisis counseling, disaster programs, legal and/or social services
• 2021: ~8,707 hours with clients
Mobile Crisis Teams

Intensive, local, face-to-face short-term mental health services. During a crisis, can help people return to their baseline level of functioning.

https://mn.gov/dhs/crisis

CELL: **27 47 47
Financial Issues

Farmer-Lender Mediation

Rural Finance Authority
Coping with Farm & Rural Stress Brochure

• Free print copies: 651-201-6012
• Web site with hyperlinks
  www.minnesotafarmstress.com
• Printable PDF online, too
Down on the Farm Kit

Slide set + facilitators’ guide
Local experts and resource people
Free - No license required
Adapting/modifying encouraged

www.minnesotafarmstress.com
“You are not alone.”
Podcasts at www.rrfn.com/transFARMation

• How Not to let the Farm Wreck your Marriage
• Life After Farming
• It’s OK to not be OK – seeing a therapist
• Suicide: Losing a Husband and Partner; Losing a Son; Dealing with the Uncontrollable
• After a Farm Accident, Attitude is Everything
• If your Horse is Dead, it’s not going to Get you to Town
• Ostrich Syndrome
• Coping with COVID
USDA Farm Stress Block Grant

- Farm Transition Support Teams, Facilitator Training
- Indigenous Food Producer Resiliency
- Workshops about Managing Stress/Enhancing Wellness for Immigrant & BIPOC Farmers
- Attorney Education and Resources to Reduce Farmer Stress
- Latino Farmer Retreat
- Indigenous Ricing, Processing, and Personal Growth Retreat for Women
- Farm Couple Marriage/Partnership Retreats

- safeTALK T4T
- Psychological Autopsies - Suicide
- Suicide Prevention Conference for Faith Leaders
- Expand TransFARMation to Southern MN
- Professional Development Training for Farm Transition Facilitators
- 4-H Leader training & Programming
- Linking Stress & Safety for Farm Youth
- Connection & Social Support for Urban Farmers
Men’s Sheds

• Activity clubs for senior guys
• Australia
• Self-directed, “Shoulder-to-Shoulder”
• ↓loneliness/isolation; ↑health outcomes
Collaboration → Amplification

- Commodity groups
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- MN State Farm Business Management
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- U of M Extension
- Upper Midwest Center for Ag Safety & Health
- MN Depts of Health Human Services
What questions or comments do you have for me?

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