

Managing Tough Times in Agriculture

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Mastering the Dairy Business

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Studies during the 1980's and 1990's found the impact of the farm crisis and economic hardship triggered personal and social pathologies including high levels of stress-related illnesses, hypertension and psychiatric disorders, depression, diminished life satisfaction, marital discord, alcoholism, and even suicide.

Ortega, S., Johnson, D., Beeson, P., & Craft, B. (1994). The farm crisis and mental health: A longitudinal study of the 1980s. *Rural Sociology*, 59(4), 598-619.

We'll Talk Today about 3 Different Responses to Tough Times

High Levels of:
Stress
Depression
Suicidal Thinking
&What to do about it.

Acknowledgements

Robert J. Fetsch, Ph.D.
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Colorado State University

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AgriWellness

What is Stress?

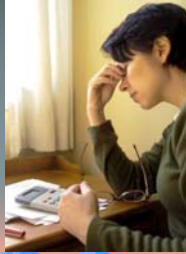
- Stress is a response to a perceived threat.
- If two people experience the same threat, one might get stressed and the other might not.
- Is all stress bad?



What About Farm Stress?



Why Be Concerned About Stress?



Stress: Incidence of Stress in Farming and Ranching

- Farm owners were among the top 12 occupations with a significant incidence of stress-related illnesses
- People with primary employment in agriculture have the highest risk for disabling injuries and fatalities
- According to the National Health Interview Survey, 75 percent of the general population suffers at least "some stress" every two weeks, and half of those experience moderate or high levels during the same time period.

Fetsch, R. J. (July 22, 2006). *Farming, ranching: Health hazard or opportunity?* Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.201. Retrieved March 26, 2007 from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10201.html>

Fetsch, R. J. (April 28, 2006). *Transitions and changes: Who copes well?* Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.215. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10215.html>

What are signs of farm stress?

Reference:

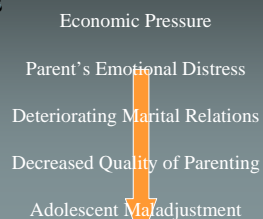
Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals

http://ces.uwyo.edu/LIFE/Ranchers_reacting_to_disaster.htm

What are signs of farm stress?

- Change in routines
- Increase in illnesses
- Appearance of farmstead declines
- Care of livestock declines
- Increase in farm accidents
- Children show signs of stress

Impact of Financial Stress on Families



Conger, R., & Elder, G. (1994). *Families in troubled times: Adapting to change in rural America*. New York: A. de Gruyter.

Impact of Financial Stress on Children and Youth

- loss of hope
- afraid of what will happen to them
- loss of peer status
- decrease in academic performance
- feeling of isolation from parents

Stress Signals

Young Children

School-age Children

Adolescents

Depression

A Common Reaction to Tough Times

Rates of Depression

- 10% of Americans experience depression each year
- 15-17% experience clinical depression
- Two-thirds women
- One of five chronically depressed
- 50-65% untreated
- High rates of improvement with treatment

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). Clinical depression in later life. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.251. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pub/consumer/10251.html>

What are signs of depression?

- Appearance
- Negative thinking
- Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities
- People problems
- Physical problems
- Guilt and low self-esteem

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revision). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Fetich, R. J. (June 22, 2006). *Managing stress during tough times*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.255. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pub/consumer/10255.html>

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). *Clinical depression in later life*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.251. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pub/consumer/10251.html>

What are signs of depression?

- Sadness
- Inability to experience genuine pleasure
- Significant weight loss (not due to dieting) or gain (5% of body weight/month)
- Excessive sleep and/or middle or late night insomnia
- Feeling lethargic or agitated

Adapted from Rotzheim, M. R. (2002, September 9). *Weathering tough times: Responding to farmers, ranchers and rural businesspersons* [Satellite Video Conference]. Available from http://www.panhandle.unl.edu/tough_times

What are signs of depression?

- Loss of energy
- Lack of future orientation
- Feeling worthless
- Inability to concentrate
- Recurrent thoughts of suicide

Adapted from Rotzheim, M. R. (2002, September 9). *Weathering tough times: Responding to farmers, ranchers and rural businesspersons* [Satellite Video Conference]. Available from http://www.panhandle.unl.edu/tough_times

What are signs of farm stress and depression checklist?

Reference:

Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals

http://ces.uwyo.edu/LIFE/Ranchers_reacting_to_disaster.htm

Men and Depression

“Men would rather kill themselves than admit they are depressed”

Suicidal Thinking & Suicide

An Uncommon Reaction to Tough Times

Suicide in the United States

- Every day, 80 Americans die from a fatal suicide act.
- Every day, approximately 2000 Americans suffer a nonfatal suicide act.
- Suicide is the 11th ranked cause of death.
- Four males die by suicide for each female suicide death.
- Eighty percent of all firearm suicide deaths are white males.

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). *Suicide in later life*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.252. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10252.html>

McIntosh, J.L. (2006, December 16). 2004 official final data. Retrieved April 23, 2009, from The American Association of Suicidology Web Site: <http://www.suicidology.org/associations/1045/files/2004dataags.pdf>

Suicide Warning Signs

- Withdrawing from family or friends
- Talking about death or suicide and/or preoccupation with death
- Statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness
- Loss of interest in things one cares about
- Substance abuse
- Disturbances in eating and sleeping patterns
- Irritability, rage, increased crying, anxiety and panic attacks
- Making arrangements -- setting one's affairs in order
- Giving away prized possessions
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Mood changes
- No sense of purpose

American Association of Suicidology. (2006, December 16). 2004 official final data. Retrieved April 23, 2007, from The American Association of Suicidology Web Site: <http://www.suicidology.org/associations/1045/files/Understanding.pdf>

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). *Suicide in later life*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.252. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10252.html>

Six Myths About Suicide

- A person who talks about suicide will not actually take his or her own life.
- Asking people about suicide will put that thought in their minds and encourage suicide attempts.
- Only crazy or insane people commit suicide.
- Suicidal tendencies are inherited.
- When a suicidal person shows improvement, the danger is over.
- People who are under a physician's care or who are hospitalized are not suicidal risks.

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). *Suicide in later life*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.252. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10252.html>

Suicide: How to respond

- The best approach to take to help a suicidal person depends on the person, who we are and what kind of relationship we have.
- Recognize ambivalence and need to heal emotional pain.
- Take the suicidal concern seriously.
- Be direct in discussing suicidal thoughts.
- Don't dare him/her to do it.
- Be nonjudgmental.
- Listen and empathize.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy.
- Take charge and seek professional help.

Barber, C. E. (June 22, 2006). *Suicide in later life*. Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.252. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10252.html>.

Suicide: How to respond

If a person has the intent, and the means to complete the plan, that individual should be assessed as high risk and not be left alone. A helping professional should be contacted immediately.

1-800-SUICIDE

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Men Seeking Help

“Where do Cowboys go to Cry?”

- * Men's Upbringing
- * Traditional Counseling

Weigel, R. R. (2003). Why ranchers and farmers are reluctant to seek counseling and how family practitioners can help. *The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues*, 8(2). On-line: [http://www.ccsu.edu/depts/fcs/pub/8\(2\)/Weigel.html](http://www.ccsu.edu/depts/fcs/pub/8(2)/Weigel.html).

Ag. Families' Reluctance to Seek Help

- * reputation
- * lack of knowledge
- * solve own problems
- * upbringing
- * perceived as lazy
- * perceived as ill
- * distrust of help
- * pride

When Farmers/Ranchers Seek Help:

- Minimize mental health jargon
- Speak in terms ranchers & farmers relate to
- Realize that they seek the status-quo
- Know that they view STRESS as an agricultural issue, not a personal issue
- Know that ranching/farming is not a job

“For many men, being a farmer or rancher is a very complex psychological, sociological, and some would say, spiritual connection. Farming and ranching is a way of life, a profession, a covenant with the land, and a commitment to the future.”

Beeson, P. (1999). *Farm crisis and mental health summit: A summary of findings.*

“Going for help beats the hell out of the hell the family goes through after a family member commits suicide or homicide.”

Robert J. Fetsch
Family Therapist

Coping Strategies of Farmers

1. Spiritual beliefs
2. Encourage each other
3. Flexibility
4. Analyze the problem
5. Relaxation
6. Diversionary activity
7. Just accept it
8. Do something physical
9. Talk to someone
10. Seek professional help

Weigel, R., and Weigel, D. (1987). *Keeping Peace on the Farm: Two-generation farm families*. Iowa State University

Successful Coping Strategies

1. Build resistance through healthy lifestyle
2. Separate work and non-work life
3. Engage in regular physical exercise
4. Relax or meditate
5. Talk it out with others
6. Work harder
7. Change strategy of attack on work
8. Accept the situation

Howard, J.H. (1985). *Coping with Job Tension: Effective and Ineffective Methods*. Public Personnel Management.

Strategies for Resilience

- Preparing & Anticipating
- Previous Success
- Greater Use of Resources
- Uniting as a Family
- Expect to Recover
- Take Advantage of Help



personal nature of agriculture

- Recovering from Natural Disasters [B-1103](#)
- Men and Depression [B-1104](#)
- Agriculture and Skin Cancer: What You Should Know [B-1105](#)
- Lenders and Angry Customers [B-1113](#)
- Surviving Tragedy [B-1117](#)
- Men Seeking Help [B-1134](#)
- Suicide: What Leads People to Kill Themselves? [B-1182](#)

http://ces.uwo.edu/LIFE/Personal_Nature_Main.htm

Agricultural Producers and Stress Series

- [B-1124.1](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: The Importance of a Healthy Attitude
- [B-1124.2](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: When Do You Need a Counselor?
- [B-1124.3](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: Eating and Activity for Health and Pleasure
- [B-1124.4](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: Identifying Stress on the Ranch and Farm
- [B-1124.5](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: Learning to Relax
- [B-1124.6](#) Agricultural Producers and Stress: Finding Your Team of Experts

http://ces.uwo.edu/LIFE/Stress_Series.html

Online Resources from Land-Grant Universities

- Anger, managing stress, living through transitions

Colorado State Extension

<http://ext.colostate.edu/pubs/pubs.html#consumer>

- Family communication

North Carolina State Extension

<http://ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/Family.html>

- Taking care of self

University of Minnesota Extension

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/ResourceManagement/toughtimes.html>

- Recovering from disaster

North Carolina State Extension

<http://ces.ncsu.edu/disaster/factsheets/stress.html>

How to Get Copies of These Resources

- Online
- Center for Dairy Excellence
- Randy R. Weigel (307) 766-4186
weig@uwyo.edu

Vital Beliefs for the Future

- * *“Refuse to be the victim”*
- * *“Believe that life is significant and has purpose.”*

Vital Beliefs (cont.)

- * *“Embrace the crisis”*
- * *“Believe that others share my troubles and my hope.”*
- * *“Believe the future is worth seeing.”*

“Anyone can give up...

*But only the strong will
continue to battle.”*

Rancher & Cancer Survivor

THANK YOU!