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

Roger T. Williams
Professional Development & Applied Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Robert J. Fetsch
Human Development & Family Studies
Colorado State University

SIGNOS DE ESTRES DE FAMILIAS DE PLANTA

Las últimas años han sido difíciles para las familias de plantas. Muchas están experimentando estrés financiero y emocional como resultado. Hay varios signos o síntomas cuando una familia de plantas está en necesidad de ayuda. Estos son signos que pueden ser observados por amigos, miembros de la familia extendida, vecinos, transportistas de leche, veterinarios, clérigos, personal escolar o trabajadores de servicios humanos. Estos signos incluyen:

- **Cambio en rutinas.** El agricultor o familia de plantas deja de asistir a la iglesia, sale de 4-H, fabricantes de hogar o otras organizaciones, o ya no va al local del café o al molino de granos.

- ** Incremento en enfermedades.** Los agricultores o miembros de la familia de plantas pueden experimentar más enfermedades respiratorias (colds, flu) o otras condiciones crónicas (aches, pains, persistent cough).

- **Apariencia de la finca se deteriora.** La familia no tiene orgullo en la forma en que las edificaciones y jardines aparecen o ya no tiene el tiempo para hacer mantenimiento.

- **Niños muestran signos de estrés.** Los niños de la finca de plantas pueden actuar en el mundo, disminuir en el rendimiento académico o ser cada vez más ausentes de la escuela; también pueden mostrar signos de abandono físico o negligencia.

SIGNOS DE ESTRÉS CRÓNICO, DE LARGO PLAZO

Cuando las familias de plantas están estresadas durante un periodo prolongado – estrés crónico, prolongado – pueden experimentar un número de signos y síntomas. Mire los siguientes efectos en la familia de plantas que ve en un día a día:

**Físico**
- Cabezas
- Ulceras
- males
- Cuellos
- Enfermedades no alimenticia
- Cardenales
- Inquietudes
- Síntomas frecuentes
- Exhacions

**Emocional**
- Lamentaciones
- Depresión
- Blandición
- Ansiedad
- Pérdida de espíritu
- Pérdida de humor

**Conductual**
- Irritabilidad
- Backbiting
- Actuación
- Retirada
- Pasividad-Aggressiveness
- Alcoholismo
- Violencia

**Cognitivo**
-pérdida de memoria
- Incapacidad de concentración
- Incompetencia a tomar decisiones

**Autoestima**
- “Soy un fracaso.”
- “Lo he hecho.”
- “¿Por qué no puedo…?”

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1 ChecklistWilliamsFetsch (Rev. 12.0618)
SIGNS OF DEPRESSION OR SUICIDAL INTENT

The greater the number of signs or symptoms a ranch or farm family is experiencing, the greater your concern should be. In addition, if family members are exhibiting the following signs of depression or suicidal intent, it is important that you connect them with professional help as soon as possible. All cries for help should be taken seriously.

**Signs of Depression**
- **Appearance:** Sad face, slow movements, unkempt look.
- **Unhappy feelings:** Feeling sad, hopeless, discouraged, and listless.
- **Negative thoughts:** “I’m a failure;” “I’m no good,” “No one cares.”
- **Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities:** “Doing anything is just too much of an effort.”
- **People problems:** “I don’t want anyone to see me,” “I feel so lonely.”
- **Physical problems:** Sleeping problems, decreased sexual interest, headaches.
- **Guilt and low self esteem:** “It’s all my fault,” “I should be punished.”

**Signs of Suicidal Intent**
- **Anxiety or depression:** Severe, intense feelings of anxiety or depression.
- **Withdrawal or isolation:** Withdrawn, alone, lack of friends and supports.
- **Helpless and hopeless:** Sense of complete powerlessness, a hopeless feeling.
- **Alcohol abuse:** There is often a link between alcoholism and suicide.
- **Previous suicidal attempts:** May have been previous attempts of low to high lethality.
- **Suicidal plan:** Frequent or constant thoughts with a specific plan in mind.
- **Cries for help:** Making a will, giving possessions away, making statements such as “I’m calling it quits,” or “Maybe my family would be better off without me.”

**HOW TO REFER A PERSON FOR HELP**
1. Be aware of the agencies and resources available in your community – what services they offer and what their limitations are.
2. Listen for signs and symptoms that the person or family needs help which you can’t provide, i.e., financial, legal or personal counseling.
3. Assess what agency or community resource would be most appropriate to address the person’s (or family’s) problems.
4. Discuss the referral with the person or family (“It sounds/looks like you are feeling _____. I think _____ could help you deal with your situation.”)
5. Explore the individual’s or family’s willingness to initiate contact with the community resource (“How do you feel about seeking help from this person/agency?”).
6. Where the person or family is unwilling to take the initiative or where there is some danger if action is not taken, you should take the initiative:
   a) Call the agency and ask to speak to the intake worker (if there is one).
   b) Identify yourself and your relationship with the person or family.
   c) State what you think the person’s or family’s needs are (needs immediate protection from suicidal acts, needs an appointment for counseling, needs financial or legal advice).
   d) Provide the agency with background information (name, address and phone; age and gender; nature of current problem or crisis; any past history you’re aware of; further information as called for).
   e) Ask the agency what follow-up action they will take:
      *When will they act on the referral?
      *Who will be the person for you to contact later if necessary?
      *What will be the cost of the service (flat fee/sliding scale)?
      *Do you need to do anything else to complete the referral?
7. Make sure the person or family and the referral agency connect and get together. Make one or more follow-up contacts with the agency if called for by the situation.

**WHERE DO I FIND HELP?**
Call 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-784-2433 24 x 7 for a live, trained person to talk with and to find local resources.

Visit [http://therapistlocator.net/](http://therapistlocator.net/)
[https://www.psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
[http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.page]
Staying Strong in Trying Times: Mental Health in Agriculture
For SW Oregon Farmers,
Monday May 4, 2020 10:00-11:30 am (MT)
StressAngerOR5.0420.ppt (Rev. 4.2920)
Staying Strong in Trying Times: Mental Health in Agriculture

“Pain is not always obvious.”

Monday, May 4, 2020 10-11:30 am (MT)

By Robert J. Fetsch, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist & Professor Emeritus
Human Development & Family Studies
Colorado State University
Staying Strong in Trying Times: Mental Health in Agriculture

Dedicated to
Paul J. Fetsch (1918-2008)
& Marcella T. Fetsch (1924-1997)
Thanks to my parents whose hard work
with our dairy farm taught me
how to work hard and be successful.
How stressful is farming and ranching?

- Working day in and day out in such highly stressful environments can contribute to high anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.
- Experiencing high levels of fatigue, sleep deprivation, stress, anxiety, and depression probably contributes to ranchers and farmers being less safe around large animals and machinery and therefore explains why farming and ranching are second only to mining in risk of accidents, disabilities, and fatalities.
Farm/Ranch stress

- Farming is one of the top 12 high stress occupations.

- According to NIOSH, farm owners were second only to laborers in the rate of death for stress-related diseases.

What were the top stressors for farmers?

- For 1,343 Iowa farm residents:
  - Death of a spouse
  - Death of a child
  - Disabling injury of a family member
  - Disabling injury to oneself
  - Foreclosure on a mortgage/loan
  - Divorce
  - Machinery breakdown during harvest
  - Loss of crop to weather
  - Loss of crop to pests/disease
  - Severe weather conditions
Economic stress↔
personal & family stress

- The worse things get, the more likely you and I are to see a friend or family member get mad, angry, and blame others.
- Stress
- Anger
- Depression
- Suicide
How do you know when your partner/friend is stressed?
HANDOUT:
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What are signs of high stress?

- Change in routines
- Increase in illness
- Appearance of farmstead declines.
- Care of livestock declines.
- Number of farm/ranch accidents increases.
- Children show signs of stress.
What are signs of chronic, prolonged stress?

- Physical
  - Headaches
  - Ulcers
  - Backaches
  - Eating irregularities
  - Sleep disturbances
  - Frequent sicknesses
  - Exhaustion
What are signs of chronic, prolonged stress?

- Physical
  - Panic attacks and/or heart palpitations
  - Sweating, trembling or shaking
  - Shortness of breath, chest pain or discomfort
  - Difficulty swallowing, nausea or abdominal distress
  - Lightheadedness, derealization or depersonalization

Non-farm/ranch depression

- The lower the monthly income, the higher the chronic depression level (Gilmer et al., 2005).
Economic stress ↔ personal & family stress

- During the mid-1980s our interdisciplinary research examined the correlations between stress and depression and last year income/debt, total assets/liabilities and overall financial outlook.
- It’s not just the amount of money or debts that we have.
- It’s what it means to us that makes the difference between how healthy we are.
How do you feel? Annoyed? ... Enraged?

Enraged?
Furious?
Angry?
Frustrated?
Irritated?
Aggravated?
Annoyed?
Farm/Ranch depression

- Some researchers found a relationship between exposure to pesticides and high levels of depression among CO farmers/ranchers.

Farm/Ranch depression

- Many farmers/ranchers struggle with depression.
- It is not clear whether they experience lower/higher levels of depression and other mental health issues as does the general population.
Farm/Ranch depression

- IA farm men were more likely to experience depression if within the previous year they had:
  - Lost something of sentimental value
  - Experienced substantial income decline
  - Gone deeply into debt
  - Faced legal problems
  - Or experienced an increase in health problems.
Farm/Ranch depression

- In North Dakota, farmers’ depression levels were almost twice that of other rural populations in the past.
Farm/Ranch depression

In Colorado, a study of 872 farmers and spouses found that those more likely to report high depressive symptoms were:

- Female, in poor physical health, and unmarried; and
- Those who lived on the farm and were no longer involved in farm work.

Farm/Ranch depression

● Being depressed puts farmers at risk:
  – Depression leads to increased occupational injury among farmers.

Farm/Ranch depression

- Being depressed puts farmers at risk:
  - Depressed farmers are at a 2.7 times greater risk for falls than farmers who do not report depression.*
  - Male principal operators with high levels of depressive symptoms have a three-fold risk of farm-work-related injuries.**


Farm/Ranch depression

- Depression was associated with high risk behaviors such as:
  - Failure to remain calm around livestock;
  - Not reading instruction manuals or safety precautions; and
  - Not using shields on moving equipment parts.

We’ve seen progress in physical, but what about in behavioral health?

- We’ve seen progress in reduced numbers of physical fatalities and injuries in agriculture, thanks to the efforts of OSHA and Extension Farm Safety programs.
- But we’ve not seen progress in reducing behavioral health issues like suicide, especially among older white men.

Source: M. Rosmann (personal communication, June 4, 2010.)
How do you know when your partner/friend is depressed?
What are signs of depression?

- Appearance
- Unhappy feelings
- Negative thinking
- Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities
- People problems
- Physical problems
- Guilt and low self-esteem
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
- Loss of energy

What are signs of depression?

- Loss of energy
- Feeling worthless/inappropriate guilt
- Inability to concentrate
- Preoccupied with negatives
- Recurrent thoughts of suicide

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The “common cold” of modern psychology is depression.

- What is the best, most effective “cure” for depression?
- Combination of taking good care of yourself, exercise, counseling, and medication.
How do you know when your partner/friend is suicidal?
What are signs of suicidal thinking?

- Anxiety or depression
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Alcohol abuse
- Previous suicidal attempts
- Suicidal plan
- Cries for help
HANDOUT:
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Farm/Ranch depression

- Given the high rates of depression that farmers experience, it is no surprise that farmers’ suicide rates are also high.


Suicide Rates for Males Working in Major Industry and Occupational Groups/100,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry and Occupational Groups</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Industries or Occupations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Material Moving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Factors that may contribute to this risk of suicide for farmers & ranchers include:

- Potential for financial loss
- Chronic physical illness
- Social isolation
- Work-home imbalance
- Barriers & unwillingness to seek behavioral health treatment

Factors that may contribute to this risk of suicide for farmers & ranchers include:

- Depression due to chronic pesticide exposure
- Increased access to lethal means
- Firearms & hanging are the two leading methods of suicide for farmers.
- Access to mental health services can be limited in rural locations.
- Finding time to leave the farm to receive medical care can be challenging.

Source: Tiesman et al., 2015.
Why do farmers/ranchers commit suicide at higher rates?

- It’s **not** increased levels of mental health issues.
- It may have to do with:
  - Demands of family farms
  - Culture of farming communities
  - Shortage of health care professionals in rural farming communities
  - High accessibility to firearms
  - Occupational stress
  - Financial difficulties
  - Family problems
  - Retirement is a trying transition for farmers.
Masculine “Scripts”  
(David & Brannon (1976)

1. No sissy-stuff - men are expected to distance themselves from anything feminine.
2. Big wheel - men should be occupationally or financially successful.
3. Sturdy oak - men should be confident and self-reliant.
4. Give ‘em hell - men should do what is necessary to “make it.”
5. “When you’re hurting, be a man—keep it inside and tell no one!”  (Fetsch, 2009.)
Suicide red flags

- *Who is most at risk of suicide?*
2018 WISQARS
U.S. Suicide Rates by Age, Gender, and Racial Group

Source: Retrieved April 22, 2020 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe
Western mountain states have the highest suicide death rates.

- The risk of suicide death increases among older men and is especially high for 75 years plus—especially if they lose their spouse and their dairy/farm.
- Most are white and not married.
What are common predictors of suicide?

- Being an older, white male with risk increasing with age—1/2 suicide deaths are by white males 35 years+
- Work problems, unemployment—1/3 who commit suicide are unemployed at the time of their death.

Suicide Mortality by State

Suicide rates per 100,000 population by state and US

Suicide rates per 100,000 population by state and US

Suicide rates per 100,000 population by state and US

Suicide rates per 100,000 population by state and US

What are some “last line” signs of suicidal intent?

- “I’m thinking about calling it quits.”
- “Maybe my family would be better off without me.”
- “Let’s have a last cigarette together.”
- “Want to buy a box of shells with your new handgun?” “Only need one…."
- “I want to show you where the keys to the truck are in case anything happens to me.”
From your experience, what are some “last lines” that got your attention?
What can you and I do?

- Connect them with local professional behavioral health therapists.
- Connect with a family member.
- Connect with a family physician, veterinarian, milk hauler, AgrAbility team member Extension Agent, rural banker, and … [Who else?]
Jackson County, OR Hotline

- Call 541-774-8201 or go to the website https://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/Mental-Health/Welcome
- Or call the national call-in hotline 24/7:
  - 1-800-SUICIDE
  - 1-800-784-2433
What can you and I do?

- Watch for subtle signs that something is not right.
- Don’t wait for the “right” time to reach out.

What can you and I do?

- Listen very well.
- Hear the sounds of depression and suicidal thinking.
- Ask not “how are ya?” but, “How are you doing, George?... You must be going through hell!”
- Really connect.
- Empathize.
- Be mindful of their well-being.

How Do I Ask About Suicide?

When your spidey senses tingle, ask about suicidal intensity.

1. I’ve noticed _____ (list specific behaviors/factors).
2. Given what you are going through it would be understandable if you were thinking about suicide. Have you been thinking about killing yourself?

Yes or No

3. Thank you for trusting me.
4. I am on your team/You are not alone.
5. I have some ideas that might help.

Resources
Colorado Crisis Services: (844) 493-8255
Text HOME to 741-741
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (844) 273-8255

Source: Rowan, Amy K. (2019, March 31. Focused on Health Equities and Social Determinants of Health.)
How can I respond best?

- With respect
- With sincerity and honesty
- By listening and hearing their pain and worry—not by pitying them
- By caring

How can I respond best?

• IF YOU’RE UNSURE—REFER!
When you and I notice a family member or friend who is stressed out, angry, depressed, or suicidal, where do we look for help?
When I search for behavioral health therapists, I check:

- http://therapistlocator.net/
- https://www.psychologytoday.com
- http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.page1
HANDOUT:
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What do we do next?

- Recognize signs of high stress, anger, depression, and suicidal thinking.
- Take action. Find out about which local resources are available.
- Check your yellow pages under “Counselors.”
- Call 1-800-SUICIDE/784-2433 24 x 7 for a live trained person to talk with and to find local resources.
Where can we find Rural Resources?

- I recommend How to Care for Yourself While Practicing Physical Distancing
Where can we find Rural Resources?

- Has courses, publications, and videos plus pandemic-specific web pages for many of the land-grant universities.
Where can we find Rural Resources?

- CSU’s High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety
  [https://outlook.office.com/mail/deeplink?version=2020041301.13&popoutv2=1&leanbootstrap=1](https://outlook.office.com/mail/deeplink?version=2020041301.13&popoutv2=1&leanbootstrap=1)
- Colorado Crisis Services: 1-844-493-8255
- Avera Farm Stress Hotline (Dakotas): 1-800-691-4336
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
Where can we find Rural Resources?

- I recommend Rural Response to Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention [https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/farmer-mental-health](https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/farmer-mental-health)
- See full series details and info about our instructor, Lauren Ziegler, at [https://coloradoproduce.org/covid-19](https://coloradoproduce.org/covid-19)
Where can we find research-based Family Life Fact Sheets? [http://extension.colostate.edu Publications Family]

- Managing Stress During Tough Times – 10.255
- Making Decisions and Coping Well with Drought – 10.256
- Coping with Natural Disasters 10.257
- Transitions and Changes: Practical Strategies 10.214
- Transitions and Changes: Who Copes Well 10.215
Where can we find research-based Family Life Fact Sheets? [http://extension.colostate.edu](http://extension.colostate.edu) → Publications → Family

- Dealing with Our Anger 10.236
- Dealing with Couples’ Anger 10.238
- 10 Tips for Successful Family Meetings – 10.249
- Children’s Anger and Tantrums – 10.248
Where can we find research-based Family Life Fact Sheets? http://extension.colostate.edu

- Ranching and Farming With Family Members – 10.217
- Farming, Ranching: Health Hazard or Opportunity? – 10.201
- Preventing Youth and Adult Suicide – 10.213
Questions?
& Answers
What local resources do you recommend?
Be careful out there.
Take good care of yourselves and others!
Stay Strong in Trying Times!
Thank you very much!
Thank you very much!

For More Information, Contact:
Bob Fetsch
970-491-5648
robert.fetsch@colostate.edu
How do I make an effective referral?

1) Be aware of the agencies and resources available in your community—what services they offer and what their limitations are.

2) Listen for signs and symptoms that the person or family needs help which you cannot provide, i.e., financial, legal or personal counseling.
How do I make an effective referral?

3) Assess what agency or community resource would be most appropriate to address the person’s/family’s problems.

4) Discuss the referral with the person/family. “It sounds/looks like you’re feeling ______. I think ______, ______, or ______ could help you deal with your situation.”
How do I make an effective referral?

5) Explore the individual’s/family’s willingness to initiate contact with the resource. “How do you feel about seeking help from this person/agency?”

6) Where the person or family is unwilling to take the initiative or where there is some danger if action is not taken, you should take the initiative.
How do I make an effective referral?

– Call the agency and ask to speak to the intake worker (if there is one).
– Identify yourself and your relationship with the person/family.
– Say what you think the person’s/family’s needs are. “I think that Mr. ____ needs immediate protection from harming himself, needs a counseling appointment, and needs financial and legal assistance.”
How do I make an effective referral?

- Provide the agency with background information (name, address and telephone; age and gender; nature of current problem or crisis; any past history you’re aware of; further information as called for).
How do I make an effective referral?

- Ask the agency what follow-up action they will take:
  - When will they act on the referral?
  - Who will be your contact later if necessary?
  - What will be the cost of the service (flat feet/sliding scale)?
  - Do you need to do anything else to complete the referral?
How do I make an effective referral?

7) Make sure the person/family and the referral agency connect and get together.

8) Make one or more follow-up contacts with the agency if the situation calls for it.
Thank you very much!
Comparison U.S. Workplace Suicides with Non-Workplace Suicides (Per million)
California Hotlines for Dairy Farm Families?

- Sorry, but I know of no CA hotlines for dairy farm families.
- However, there is a national call-in hotline 24/7:
  - 1-800-SUICIDE
  - 1-800-784-2433