

Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals¹



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SIGNS OF FARM AND RANCH STRESS

The last few years have been difficult for farm and ranch families. Many are experiencing financial and emotional stress as a result. There are several signs or symptoms when a farm family is in need of help. These are signs that can be observed by friends, extended family members, neighbors, milk haulers, veterinarians, clergy persons, school personnel or health and human service workers. These signs include:

- Change in routines. The rancher or ranch family stops attending church, drops out of 4-H, Home makers or other groups, or no longer stops in at the local coffee shop or feed mill.
- Increase in illness. Farmers or farm family members may experience more upper respiratory illnesses (colds, flu) or other chronic conditions (aches, pains, persistent cough).
- Appearance of farmstead declines. The farm family no longer takes pride in the way farm buildings and grounds appear, or no longer has the time to do maintenance work.
- Care of livestock declines. Cattle may not be cared for in the usual way; they may lose condition, appear gaunt or show signs of neglect or physical abuse.
- Increase in farm or ranch accidents. The risk of farm accidents increases due to fatigue or loss of ability to concentrate; children may be at risk if there isn't adequate childcare.
- Children show signs of stress. Farm and ranch children may act out, decline in academic performance or be increasingly absent from school; they may also show signs of physical abuse or neglect.

SIGNS OF CHRONIC, PROLONGED STRESS

When farm and ranch families are stressed out for long periods of time – chronic, prolonged stress – they may experience a number of signs and symptoms. Watch for the following effects in farm families you see on a day-to-day basis:

and symptoms. Watch for the following effects in farm farmles you see on a day-to-day basis.		
Physical	Emotional	Behavioral
☐ Headaches	☐ Sadness	\square Irritability
□ Ulcers	□ Depression	☐ Backbiting
☐ Backaches	☐ Bitterness	☐ Acting Out
☐ Eating Irregularities	□ Anger	☐ Withdrawal
☐ Sleep Disturbances	☐ Anxiety	☐ Passive-Aggressiveness
☐ Frequent Sickness	☐ Loss of Spirit	☐ Alcoholism
☐ Exhaustion	☐ Loss of Humor	□ Violence
Cognitive		Self-Esteem
☐ Memory Loss		"I'm a failure."
☐ Lack of Concentration		"I blew it."
☐ Inability to Make Decisions ☐ "Why can't I?"		

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	Signs of Suicidal Intent
☐ Appearance: Sad face, slow movements, unkempt look.	☐ Anxiety or depression : Severe, intense feelings of anxiety <u>or</u> depression.
☐ Unhappy feelings: Feeling sad, hopeless, discouraged, and listless.	☐ Withdrawal or isolation: Withdrawn, alone, lack of friends and supports.
☐ Negative thoughts: "I'm a failure;" "I'm no good," "No one cares."	☐ Helpless and hopeless: Sense of complete powerlessness, a hopeless feeling.
☐ Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities: "Doing anything is just too much of an effort."	☐ Alcohol abuse: There is often a link between alcoholism and suicide.
☐ People problems: "I don't want anyone to see me," "I feel so lonely."	☐ Previous suicidal attempts: <u>May</u> have been previous attempts of low to high lethality.
☐ Physical problems: Sleeping problems, decreased sexual interest, headaches.	☐ Suicidal plan: Frequent or constant thoughts with a specific plan in mind.
☐ Guilt and low self esteem: "It's all my fault," "I should be punished."	☐ 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/.

https://www.psvchologytodav.com

http://www.networktherapy.com/directory/find_therapist.asp

http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.pagel

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.
- Source: Smith, M. J., Colligan, M. J., & Hurrell, J. J. (1977). A review of NIOSH psychological research—1977. Paper presented at the conference on occupational stress. Los Angeles.

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?

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

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

Adapted from Rosmann, 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

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?

- Some researchers found a relationship between exposure to pesticides and high levels of depression among CO farmers/ranchers.
- Source: Stallones, L., & Beseler, C. (2004). Safety practices and depression among farm residents. *Annals of Epidemiology*, *14*, 571-578.

- 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.

- 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.

 In North Dakota, farmers' depression levels were almost twice that of other rural populations in the past.

- 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.

Source: Stallones, L., Leff, M., Garrett, C., Criswell, L., & Gillan, T. (1995). Depressive symptoms among Colorado farmers. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, *1*(1), 37-43.

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

Source: Grisso, R. D., Mariger, S. C., Wong, S. S., Perumpral, J. V., Christensen, N. K., Miller, R. L., et al. (2008). Depression as a risk factor for agricultural injuries. Paper presented at the ASABE Annual International Meeting, Providence, RI.

- 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.**
 - Source: *Sprince, N. L., Zwerling, C., Lynch, C. F., Whitten, P. S., Thu, K., Gillette, P. P., et al. (2003). Risk factors for falls among Iowa farmers: A case-control study nested in the agricultural health study. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 44, 265-272.
 - Source: **Park, H., Sprince, N. L., Lewis, M. Q., Burmeister, L. F., Whitten, P. S., & Zwerling, C. (2001). Risk factors for work-related injury among male farmers in Iowa: A prospective cohort study. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 43(6), 542-547.

- 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.

Source: Stallones, L., & Beseler, C. (2004). Safety practices and depression among farm residents. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 14, 571-578.

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

Adapted from Rosmann, M. R. (2002, September 9). Weathering tough times.

What are signs of depression?

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

Adapted from Rosmann, M. R. (2002, September 9). Weathering tough times.

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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

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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.

Source: Gallagher, L. M., Kleim, C., Beautrais, A. L., & Stallones, L. (2008). Suicide and occupation in New Zealand, 2001-2005. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 14, 45-50.

Source: Gregoire, A. (2002). The mental health of farmers. *Occupational Medicine*, 52, 471-576.

Source: Turvey, C., Stromquist, A., Kelly, K., Zwerling, C., & Merchant, J. (2002). Financial loss and suicidal ideation in a rural community sample. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 106, 373-380.

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



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

• Source: Tiesman, H. M., Konda, S., Hartley, D., Menéndez, C. C., Ridenour, M., & Hendricks, S. (2015). Suicide in U.S. workplaces, 2003-2010: A comparison with non-workplace suicides. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 48(6), 674-682.

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 <u>not</u> 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)

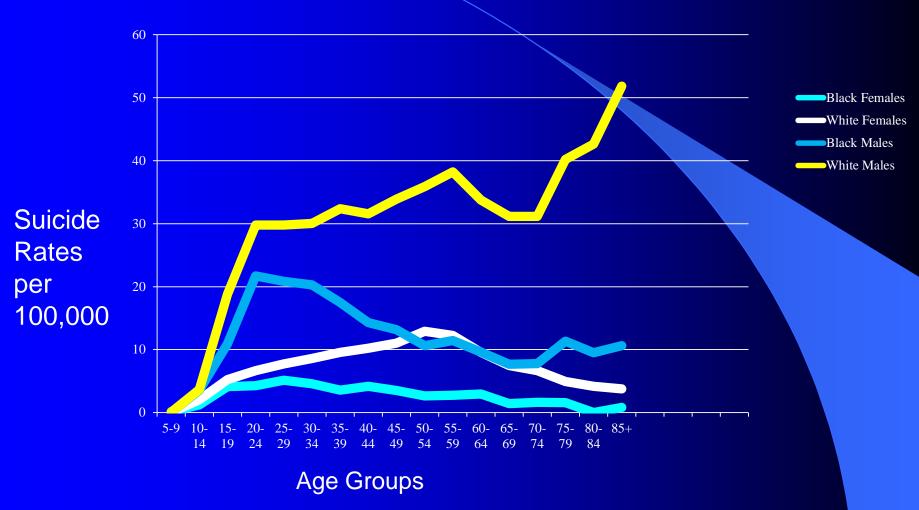
- 1. No sissy-stuff men are expected to distance themselves from anything feminine.
- 2. Big wheel men should be occupationally or financially successful.
- 3. Sturdy oak men should be confident and self-reliant.
- 4. Give 'em hell -men should do what is necessary to "make it."
- 5. "When you're hurting, 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

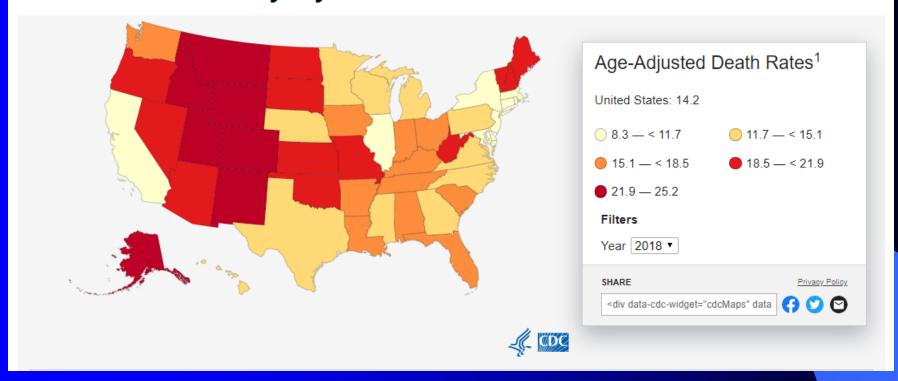
Western mountain states have the highest suicide death rates.

- 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.

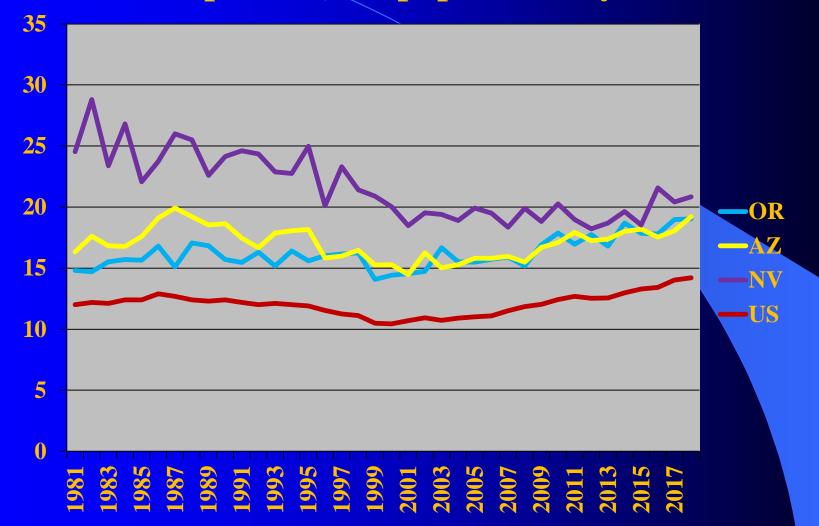
What are common predictors of suicide?

- 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.
- Source: Colorado Trust, (2002), p. 8.

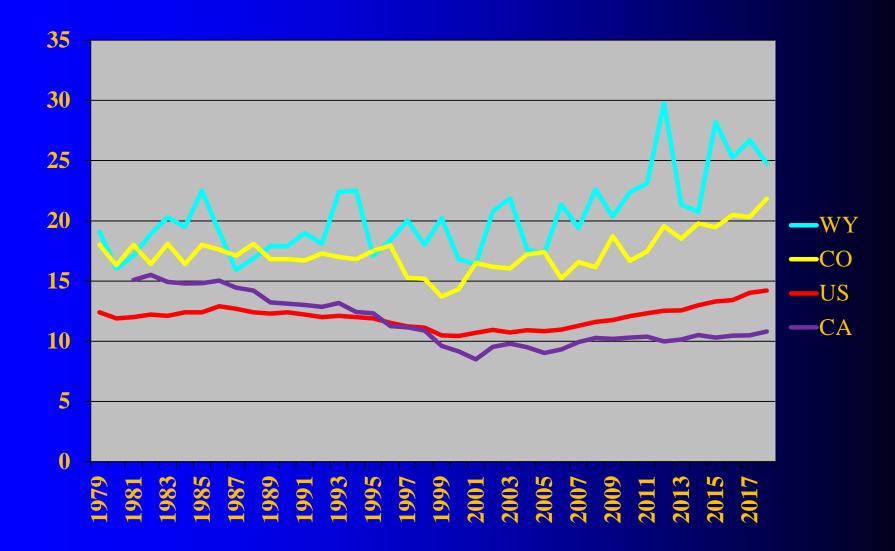
Suicide Mortality by State



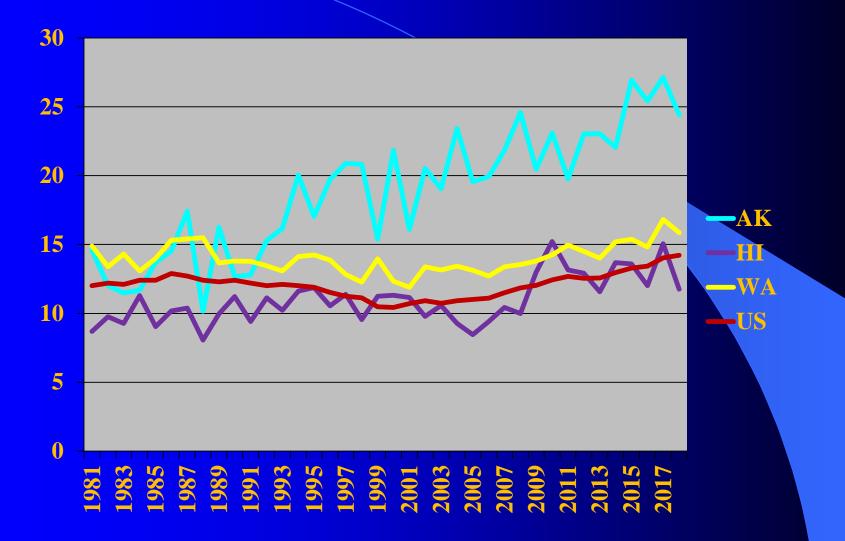
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicidemortality/suicide.htm



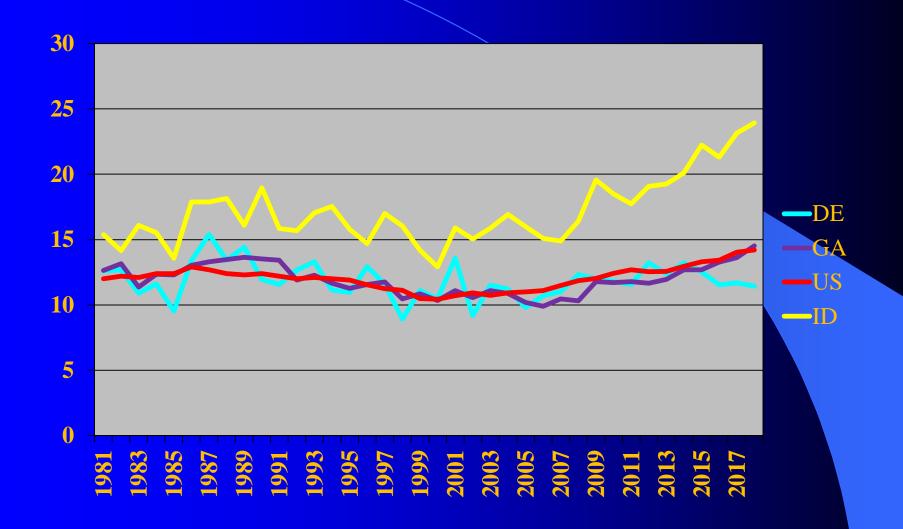
Retrieved April 23, 2020 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe . Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).



Retrieved April 23, 2020 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgibin/broker.exe . Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).



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Retrieved April 23, 2020 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgibin/broker.exe . Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).

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.
- Source: Bowman, Angela. (2014, September 2). The unspoken tragedy. Retrieved October 20, 2015 from: http://www.porknetwork.com/porknews/Commentary-The-unspoken-tragedy-27358295....

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.
- Source: Call to support farmers' mental health. (13 October 2015). Radio New Zealand News. Retrieved October 20, 2015 from: http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/rural/286867/'we-just-need-a-listening-ear'

How Do I Ask About Suicide?

When your spidey senses tingle, ask about suicidal intensity.

- 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

Source: Adapted from Bosch K., & Griffin, C. (2002, September 5). Weathering tough times: Responding to farmers, ranchers and rural businesspersons [Satellite Video Conference]. Available from http://www.panhandle.unl.edu/tough_times.

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://www.networktherapy.com/director y/find_therapist.asp
- http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.c om/therapistlocator.pagel

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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.

- I recommend How to Care for Yourself
 While Practicing Physical Distancing
- https://pages.thenationalcouncil.org/inde x.php/email/emailWebview It's from Mental Health First Aid/National Council for Behavioral Health.

- I recommend EDEN The Extension Disaster Education Network at https://extensiondisaster.net/.
- Its COVID-19 page at <u>https://extensiondisaster.net/current-situation-covid-19/</u>
- Has courses, publications, and videos plus pandemic-specific web pages for many of the land-grant universities.

- CSU's High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety
 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

- I recommend Rural Response to Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention 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

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 → 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

- 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.

- 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."

- 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.

- 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."

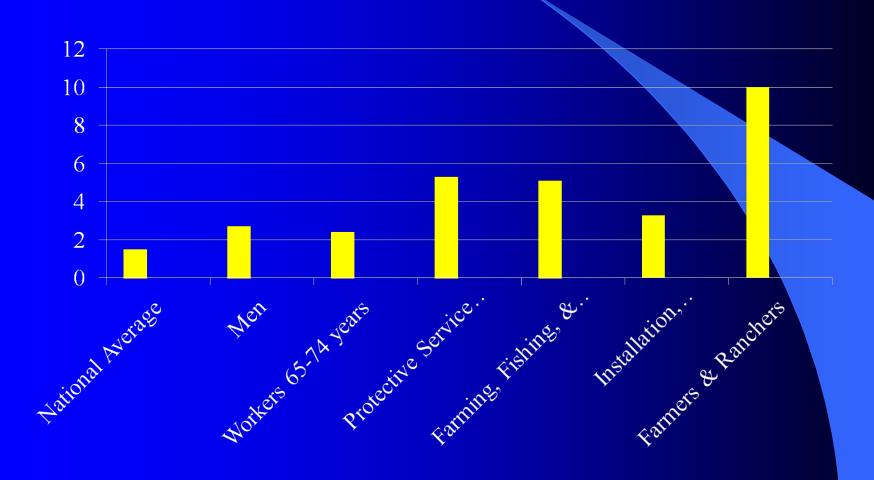
Provide the agency with background information (name, address and telephone; age and gender; nature of current problem or crisis; any past history you're aware of; further information as called for).

- Ask the agency what follow-up action they will take:
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 - 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?

- 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!

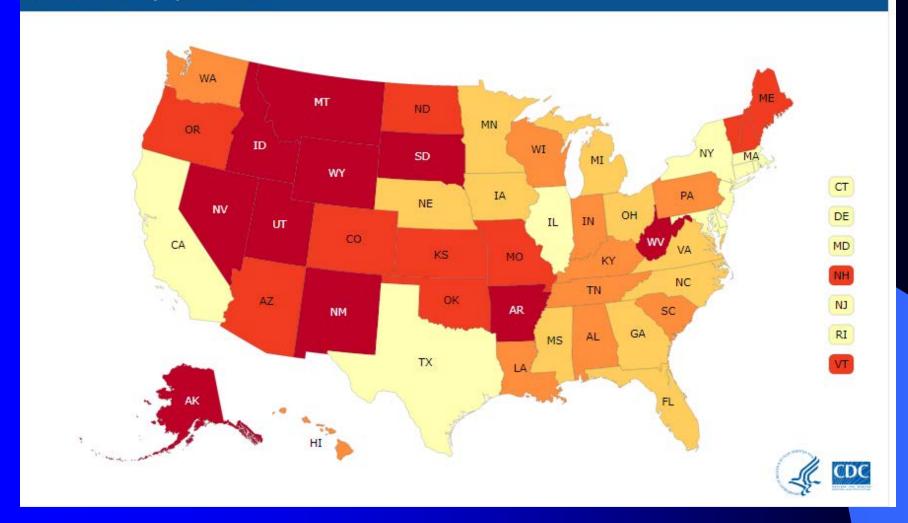
Comparison U.S. Workplace Suicides with Non-Workplace Suicides (Per million)



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**

Suicide Mortality by State: 2017



https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm

