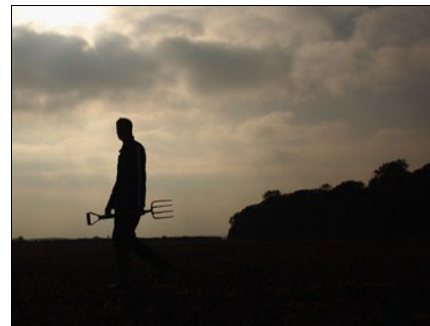


# THE WORLD OF FARMING AND RANCHING

## Agricultural Stress and Coping

Farming and ranching are highly stressful for a variety of reasons:

- Economic and market conditions change regularly, so profits are uncertain.
- Producers must continually adapt to rapid technological advances and consumer expectations.
- Modern and complex machinery, uncooperative livestock, toxic chemicals, and dangerous pesticides make agriculture a dangerous occupation with a high risk of accidents.
- Farmers and ranchers also feel pressured to work long hours and take few or no rest breaks leaving them feeling fatigued and tired making it easier to make mistakes.
- Stress itself may lead to illness and injury.



Farming is one of the top 12 high stress occupations. There signs of high stress that farmers, ranchers, and their families should be aware of :

- **Change in routines.** Attendance in church stops; dropping out of 4-H, Home makers, or other groups occurs; and trips to the local coffee shop or feed mill stops.
- **Increase in illness.** Family members may experience more upper respiratory illnesses (colds, flu) or other chronic conditions (aches, pains, persistent cough).
- **Appearance of farmstead declines.** The family may no longer take pride in the way 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 lost condition, appear gaunt, or show signs of neglect or physical abuse.
- **Number of farm/ranch accidents increases.** Accidents increase 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.** Children may act out, decline in academic performance or be increasingly absent from school, or show signs or neglect or physical abuse.

## Managing Stress

Rural people experience stress with cyclical farm crises, natural disasters and social isolation which can lead to mental health disorders. Some researchers have also examined role-related stress that is associated with the intergenerational transfer of farms. Intergenerational transfers may involve issues of authority, control, and the dividing of tasks and income.

There are many constructive ways that stress can be dealt with:

- Recognize the symptoms of stress.
- Recognize any destructive behaviors you may engage in to deal with stress.
- Recognize what has worked in the past in terms of stress management.
- Locate the source of stress, and address the source and symptoms.
- Know your limits.
- Learn to accept what is realistically beyond your control.
- Delegate tasks to others, as appropriate.
- Include aerobic, physical activity as part of your weekly routine.
- Take care of yourself (eating regular, healthful meals; sleeping; resting; exercising, etc.).
- Make time for fun.
- Make time for relaxation.



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