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 respitorary 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 maintence 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.



www.agrability.okstate.edu

888-885-5588 (voice/tty)

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.



Fetsch, R. (2007). Managing stress during tough times. Retrieved from: http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/ consumer/10255.html

Gustafson, D. T., Preston, K. & Hudson, J. (2009). *Mental health: Overlooked and disregarded in rural America, 4,* Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons, NB. Retrieved from: http://files.cfra.org/pdf/Mental-Health-Overlooked-and-Disregarded-in-Rural-America.pdf

Hovey, J.D. & Seligman, L.D. (2006). The mental health of agricultural workers. In J.E. Lessenger (Ed.), Agricultural Medicine: A Practical Guide (pp. 282-299). New York, NY:Springer.

Reynolds, K. (2008). Stress management for women farmers and ranchers. University of California Small Farm Program. Retrieved from: http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/Docs/stress_management

Oklahoma AgrAbility

1514 W. Hall of Fame • Oklahoma State University • Stillwater, OK 74078 www.agrability.okstate.edu • Phone: 888-885-5588 Email: ability@okstate.edu

Oklahoma AgrAbility Annual Report is provided by the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project, 1514 West Hall of Fame Stillwater, OK 74078; 405-744-2398; <u>www.agrability.okstate.edu</u>. The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project is a joint effort of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma ABLE Tech, Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation and the Langston University School of Physical Therapy. Mention or display of a trademark, proprietary product or firm does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Oklahoma State University, Langston University School of The National AgrAbility Project, and does not imply approval to the exclusion of other suitable products or firms. Oklahoma State University and Langston University, in compliance with Titles V1 and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of their policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. This publication is issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared at 50 cents per copy by USDA-NIFA grant #2010-41590-20754.