

STANDING TOGETHER: BREAKING THE SILENCE AROUND FARM STRESS

Building awareness and connection where it matters most.

Cultivating Hope in the Fields: Farm & Ranch Suicide Awareness

Farming and ranching are more than professions – they are ways of life built on resilience, hard work, and deep commitment to providing for others. Yet behind this strength, many agricultural producers experience intense pressure that can impact mental

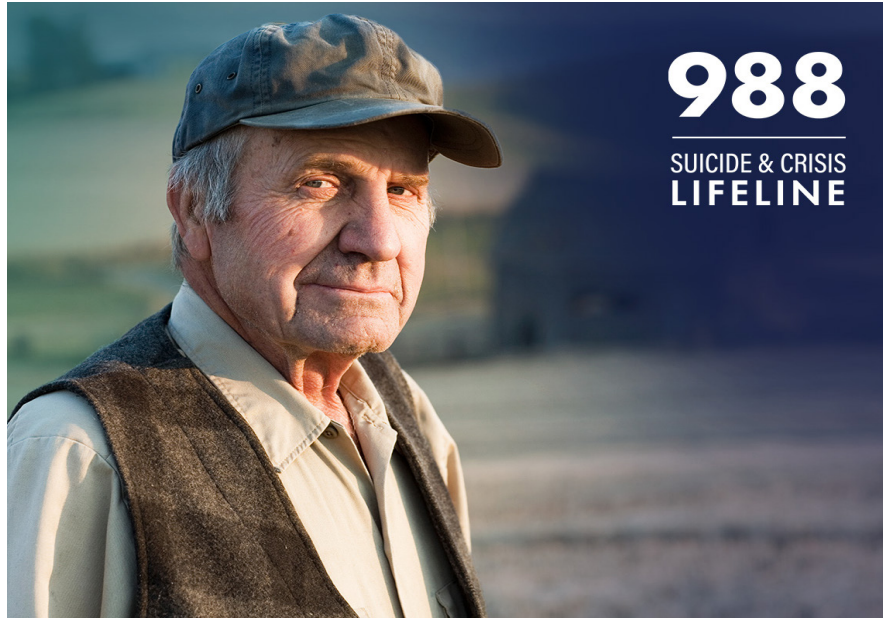
“YOU ARE NOT ALONE. YOU MATTER. WE NEED YOU HERE.”

health in serious ways.

Farm stress refers to the unique mental, emotional, and physical strain experienced by agricultural producers. Factors such as volatile markets, unpredictable weather, high debt, long hours, and isolation create a level of stress few other professions encounter. Research shows that suicide rates among farmers are significantly higher than the national average, making awareness and support critically important.

Why Farm Stress Happens

Producers often carry significant responsibility, not only for their business, but for family legacies



and future generations. Some common contributors include:

Financial pressure from fluctuating commodity prices and high debt loads

Environmental uncertainty due to weather, drought, and natural disaster

Operational demands requiring long hours and physically demanding labor

Isolation from working long days in rural settings

Cultural stigma that can make seeking help feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar

Succession concerns, including uncertainty about who will continue the farm or the fear of losing land that has been in the family for generations

Many farmers and ranchers also feel unable to step away from daily responsibilities, often postponing medical or mental health care. Combined with access to lethal means such as firearms or chemicals, this can increase the risk of suicide completion.

Recognizing Signs of Stress or Crisis

Farm stress can show up in many ways. Some common warning signs include:

Physical

- Chronic fatigue
- Trouble sleeping
- Headaches or muscle tension

Behavioral

- Increased alcohol or tobacco use

“FARMERS AND RANCHERS CARRY IMMENSE RESPONSIBILITY — SUPPORTING THEIR MENTAL HEALTH HELPS SUSTAIN THE FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND FOOD SYSTEMS WE ALL DEPEND ON.”

- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Irritability or anger

Emotional or Mental

- Anxiety or depression
- Hopelessness
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions

Signs that someone may be experiencing suicidal thoughts include:

- Talking about wanting to die or feeling like a burden

Helpful approaches include:

- Speak directly and openly
- Listen without judgment
- Show care and concern
- Offer hope and remind them support is available
- Encourage professional help
- Remove access to harmful items when possible
- Practice active listening by giving full attention and reflecting what you hear

Often, simply knowing

such as Farm Bureau offer programs like Rural Minds Matter, which connect producers with specialized resources and information

What Our Community Can Do

Reducing stigma and increasing access to support requires community effort. Helpful steps include:

- Talking openly about mental health
- Sharing resources in places farmers already gather such as co-ops, coffee shops, elevators, and farm service agencies
- Offering flexible support options like telehealth or virtual visits

- Providing education at agricultural meetings and events
- Checking in regularly with neighbors, friends, and family members

Farmers and ranchers dedicate their lives to sustaining our communities. Supporting their mental health helps

ensure the sustainability of agriculture itself.

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is available. You are not alone. You matter. We need you here.

Article Information Provided by: Leonard Kaiser, LCPC, The Center for Counseling



- Expressing feelings of being trapped or without purpose
- Increased substance use
- Extreme mood changes
- Social withdrawal or isolation

How to Help Someone Who May Be Struggling

Talking about mental health or suicide can feel uncomfortable, but open conversations can save lives.

someone cares can make a meaningful difference.

Resources Are Available

Support is available both locally and nationally. Call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, for immediate support. Connect with local mental health providers, including The Center for Counseling & Consultation. Agricultural organizations



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