

A long wooden bridge with a train on the left side, stretching into the distance under a blue sky with light clouds. The bridge has wooden railings and a wooden deck. The train consists of several dark-colored railcars. The background shows a green landscape with trees and a body of water on the right side.

# Farming and Mental Health

Farming and Ranching have unique occupational hazards and stresses with strong traditions of being an independent occupation. The tendency is not to openly talk about problems or ask for support until things are absolutely desperate. Taking an inventory of your situation is the 1<sup>st</sup> step.

On these pages you will find:

- The Farm Stress Inventory for you to assess your stressors
- Farm Stress Line information
- Internet links to a variety of organizations that may help you
- Links to the Network's resources related to stress and sleep

# FARM STRESS INVENTORY:

Farming has ongoing situations that cause stress. Common farm stressors are finances, daily hassles, and lack of control over the weather, heavy work overloads, and conflict in relationships.

Complete the following inventory to identify your stressors.

1 = low stress                      5 = high stress.

1	Sudden and significant increase in debt load	1	2	3	4	5
2	Significant production loss due to disease or pests	1	2	3	4	5
3	Insufficient regular cash flow to meet financial obligations or for daily necessities	1	2	3	4	5
4	Delay in planting or harvesting due to weather	1	2	3	4	5
5	Media distortions of farm situation	1	2	3	4	5
6	Low commodity prices	1	2	3	4	5
7	Significant changes in type or size of farming operation	1	2	3	4	5
8	Meeting with loan officer for additional loan	1	2	3	4	5
9	Purchase of major machinery, facility or livestock	1	2	3	4	5
10	Not being considered part of the farm business by others	1	2	3	4	5
11	Taking an off-the-farm job to meet expenses	1	2	3	4	5
12	Prolonged bad weather	1	2	3	4	5
13	Problems with weeds or insects	1	2	3	4	5
14	Machinery breakdown at a critical time	1	2	3	4	5
15	Not enough time to spend with spouse	1	2	3	4	5
16	Crop loss due to weather	1	2	3	4	5
17	Illness during planting/harvesting	1	2	3	4	5
18	Deciding when to sell	1	2	3	4	5
19	Rising expenses	1	2	3	4	5
20	Government policies and regulations	1	2	3	4	5
21	Concerns about the continued financial viability of the farm	1	2	3	4	5
22	Having a loan request turned down	1	2	3	4	5
23	Farming-related accident	1	2	3	4	5
24	Government free-trade policies	1	2	3	4	5
25	Government "cheap food" policies	1	2	3	4	5
26	Metric conversion	1	2	3	4	5
27	Breeding or reproductive difficulties with livestock	1	2	3	4	5
28	No farm help or loss of help when needed	1	2	3	4	5
29	Need to learn/adjust to new government regulations and policies	1	2	3	4	5
30	Spouse doesn't have enough time for child-rearing	1	2	3	4	5

# FARM STRESS INVENTORY:

Continued

Complete the following inventory to identify your stressors.

1 = low stress                      5 = high stress.

31	Increased workload at peak times	1	2	3	4	5
32	Unplanned interruptions	1	2	3	4	5
33	Use of hazardous chemicals on the farm	1	2	3	4	5
34	Dealing with salespeople	1	2	3	4	5
35	Long work hours	1	2	3	4	5
36	Few vacations away from the farm	1	2	3	4	5
37	Feeling isolated on the farm	1	2	3	4	5
38	Having to travel long distances for services, shopping and health care	1	2	3	4	5
39	Pressure of having too much to do in too little time	1	2	3	4	5
40	Keeping up with new technology and products	1	2	3	4	5
41	Worrying about market conditions	1	2	3	4	5
42	Having to make decisions without all the necessary information	1	2	3	4	5
43	Being expected to work on the farm as well as manage the house	1	2	3	4	5
44	Worrying about owing money	1	2	3	4	5
45	Worrying about keeping the farm in the family	1	2	3	4	5
46	Not seeing enough people	1	2	3	4	5
47	Not having enough money or time for entertainment and recreation	1	2	3	4	5
48	Death of a parent or member of immediate family	1	2	3	4	5
49	Death of a friend	1	2	3	4	5
50	Problems balancing work and family responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
51	Problems with relatives in farm operating agreement	1	2	3	4	5
52	Divorce or marital separation	1	2	3	4	5
53	Problems with a partnership	1	2	3	4	5
54	Daughter or son leaving home	1	2	3	4	5
55	Trouble with parents or in-laws	1	2	3	4	5
56	Conflict with spouse over spending priorities	1	2	3	4	5
57	Major decisions being made without my knowledge or input	1	2	3	4	5
58	Having to wear too many hats, eg. farmer, spouse, father, son etc.	1	2	3	4	5
59	Surface-rights negotiations	1	2	3	4	5
60	Other recent events which have had an impact on your life	1	2	3	4	5

## PUTTING YOUR INVENTORY SCORE IN PERSPECTIVE:

### If the majority of your scores are 4 or 5:

- It is important to devote immediate attention to stress management. Give yourself credit for the tough times you have survived. Long term stress depletes your internal resources. It is common to identify with these farm stresses in your operation. Remember there are people who will listen and help brainstorm ways to cope. There is no shame in talking to someone about your concerns.

### If the majority of your scores are 3:

- Focus on your stress management strengths. Continue to expand your coping skills. Set goals that allow you take control of what is controllable on your farm. The skills you are using and those you will develop can help you to deal with uncontrollable situations that arise.

### If the majority of your scores are 1 and 2:

- You have stress coping skills. Share your skills with others. Farming will continue to challenge you, so continue to communicate, prioritize daily tasks and support your family, friends, workers and community in difficult times.

**WHO CAN HELP? Farm Stress Line:** 1-800-667-4442

Farmers and rural families face a range of issues. The Farm Stress Line is a 24hr dual purpose phone line designated to respond to the needs of Saskatchewan farmers and rural families. It is administered and delivered by Mobile Crisis Services with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture. It provides a free 1-800 number for rural families to access confidential telephone counselling, support, information, and referral services for personal and production issues.

**THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA:** ([www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca))

The [Mental Health Commission of Canada](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca) has two Suicide Prevention Toolkits. One tailored for people who have attempted suicide, and one for people who have lost someone to suicide.

**Network Resources:** Find on our website <http://aghealth.usask.ca>

- [The Daily Chore: Handling Stress on the Farm](#)
- [Sleepless in Saskatchewan](#)

### WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE:

- [Making Sleep Work for You](#)
- [Stress and Agriculture](#)
- [Caring for the Caregiver](#)

Contact for more information:  
306-966-6644 or  
306-966-6647



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