University of California Cooperative Extension





San Bernardino County

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DAIRY TALK

March 2009

777 East Rialto Avenue Website: http://cesanbernardino.ucdavis.edu

San Bernardino, Ca. 92415 E-mail: ngpeterson.ucdavis.edu

Phone: (909) 387-2171 Fax: (909) 387-3306

**Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression:**

**A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals**

C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0149627.wmf

C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0149627.wmf



Roger T. Williams Robert J. Fetsch

Professional Development & Applied Studies Human Development & Family Studies

University of Wisconsin-Madison Colorado State University

**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 may need 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:

* **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 sings 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.
* **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 a 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.

**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:

**Emotional**

* Sadness
* Depression
* Bitterness
* Anger
* Anxiety
* Loss of Spirit
* Loss of Humor

**Behavioral**

* Irritability
* Backbiting
* Acting Out
* Withdrawal
* Passive-Aggressiveness
* Alcoholism
* Violence

**Physical**

* Headaches
* Ulcers
* Backaches
* Eating Irregularities
* Sleep Disturbances
* Frequent Sickness
* Exhaustion

**Cognitive**

* Memory Loss
* Lack of Concentration
* Inability to Make Decisions

**Self-Esteem**

* “I’m a failure.”
* “I blew it.”
* “Why can’t I…?”

**Signs of Depression or Suicidal Intent**

The greater the number of sings or symptoms a ranch or family is experiencing, the greater your concern should be. In addition, if family member 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**

* **Appearance:**  Sad face, slow movements, unkempt look.
* **Unhappy feelings:** Feeling sad, hopeless, discouraged, and listless.
* **Negative thoughts:** “I’m a failure;” “I’m no good,” “No one cares.”
* **Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities:** “Doing anything is just too much of an effort.”
* **People problems:** “I don’t want anyone to see me,” “I feel so lonely.”
* **Physical problems:**  Sleeping problems, decreased sexual interest, headaches.
* **Guilt and low self esteem:** “It’s all my fault,” “I should be punished.”

**Signs of Suicidal Intent**

* **Anxiety or depression:** Severe, intense feelings of anxiety or depression.
* **Withdrawal or isolation:** Withdrawn, alone, lack of friends and supports.
* **Helpless and hopeless:** Sense of complete powerlessness, a hopeless feeling.
* **Alcohol abuse:** There is often a link between alcoholism and suicide.
* **Previous suicidal attempts:** May have been previous attempts of how to high lethality.
* **Suicidal plan:** Frequent or constant thoughts with a specific plan in mind
* **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 with out me.”

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Nyles G. Peterson

Dairy Advisor

**How to Refer a Person for Help**

* 1. 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).
  2. Provide the agency with background information (name, address and phone; age and gender; nature of current problem or crises; any past history you’re aware of; further information as called for).
  3. 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?

1. 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.
2. Be aware of the agencies and resources

available in your community – what

services they offer and what their

limitations are.

1. Listen for signs and symptoms that the

person or family needs help which you

can’t provide, i.e., financial, legal or

personal counseling.

1. Assess what agency or community

resource would be most appropriate to

address the person’s (or family’s)

problems.

1. Discuss the referral with the person or

family (“It sounds/looks like you are

feeling\_\_\_\_. I think\_\_\_\_could help you

deal with your situation.”)

1. 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?”)

1. 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:

* 1. Call the agency and ask to speak to

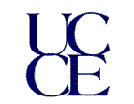
the intake worker (if there is one).

* 1. Identify yourself and your relationship

with the person or family.









**Resources for California Farmers Experiencing Stress**

Compiled by: California Dairy Quality Assurance Program and

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

**National Crisis Management Resources**

**1-800-SUICIDE**

**1-800-442-HOPE 1-800-442-4673**

**National Youth Crisis Helpline 1-800-999-9999**

**Depression** is a serious, life-threatening condition that affects an estimated 19 million Americans. For more information on depression:

http://wwwldepression.org

http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm

http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/pubs.html#consumer

**California Crisis Management Resources**

**Teen Crisis**

Statewide toll free crisis line: (800) 852-8336

**United Behavioral Health – Access and Crisis Line**

(800) 479-3339

**County and Private Mental Health Services**

**Riverside County**

Crisis line: (800) 706-7500

**San Bernardino County**

Crisis Line: (909) 886-4889

Toll Free: (888) 743-1478

(909) 886-6737

**San Diego**

Crisis Line (619) 557-0500

**California Farm Bureau Federation Farm Stress Information**

http://www.cfbf.com/programs/rhs/farmstress.cfm

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Nyles G. Peterson

Dairy Advisor