

Recognizing and Managing Stress

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Plummeting prices in the dairy industry are creating critical cash-flow and long-term survivability issues on Ohio's dairy farms. These issues are also likely to be causing significant stress and strain among family members.

Observing Signs of Stress and Depression

It is no surprise that significantly reduced milk prices have caused a strain on every dairy farm. This strain has also likely caused additional stress among family members. Everyone reacts to stress differently and the more prolonged the stress event, the more likely a person will become depressed and may have suicidal thoughts. Some signs to observe include changes in routine, a decline in the appearance of the farm, neglecting livestock, increased illness, excessive alcohol use, among others.

Signs of chronic or prolonged stress can be divided into three categories – physical, emotional, and behavioral. Signs of each may include:

Physical

- Headaches
- Ulcers
- Sleep disturbances

Emotional

- Depression
- Anger
- Anxiety

Behavioral

- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Acting out

Prolonged/chronic (lasting more than two to three days) stress can result in a decline in mental wellness. Signs to watch for in each may include:

Depression

- Poor appearance
- Negative thoughts
- Physical problems
- Low self esteem

Suicidal Intent

Suicide may or may not come with a warning sign. A false stigma is talking about suicide makes a person more likely to complete the act of suicide. The truth is that talking to someone about suicide may open the door to them getting help to stop those feelings. It shows you care about them. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention provides these potential warning signs:

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue



People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation/shame
- Agitation/anger
- Relief/sudden improvement

Getting Help:

- Listen and watch for signs and symptoms
- Encourage self-help
- Call the Iowa Concern Hotline (references made to Ohio resources) at 1-800-447-1985
- Visit the OSU Addressing Agricultural Challenges website: go.osu.edu/agcrisis
- Reach out to someone for help by contacting your local county health department or Alcohol Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) board to learn what agencies are available to help you. Resources by county are available here: <https://u.osu.edu/cphp/ohio-mental-health-resource-guides/>
- Share the contact information with the person or family in need.
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255
- Text HOME to 741741

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