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Monthly Safety Blast

Produced by the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education

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Death on the Farm

For decades, farmers across the country have been dying by suicide at higher rates than the general population. The exact numbers are hard to determine, mainly because suicides by farmers are under-reported (they may get mislabeled as hunting or tractor accidents, advocates for prevention say) and because the exact definition of a farmer is elusive.

The suicide rate for male farmers has remained high compared to female farmers: just under two times that of the general population. This isn't just a problem in the U.S.; it's an international crisis. India has had more than 270,000 farmer suicides since 1995. In France, a farmer dies by suicide every two days. In China, farmers are killing themselves to protest the government's seizing of their land for urbanization. In Ireland, the number of suicides jumped following an unusually wet winter in 2012 that resulted in trouble growing hay for animal feed. In the U.K., the farmer suicide rate went up by 10 times during the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001, when the government required farmers to slaughter their animals. Finally, in Australia, the rate is at an all-time high following two years of drought.

Many farming families are experiencing financial and emotional stress as a result of changes in the economy, weather and politics. There are several signs or symptoms when a farm family may be in need of 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:

- Change in routines.
- Care of livestock declines.
- Increase in illness.
- Increase in farm or ranch accidents.
- Appearance of farmstead declines.
- Children show signs of stress.

Coping Strategies:

- Social Support
 - Network of friends/relatives
- Fun/Laughter
 - Telling jokes or reminiscing
- Relaxation/Meditation
 - Breathing controlled & heart rate/blood pressure lowered
- Physical Activity/Exercise

Comparative of Suicide by Farmers vs. Non-Farmers

Farmers	Non-Farmers
Rate is twice the national average.	Rate is slightly below average.
More likely to occur on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.	More likely to occur on Wednesday, Monday and Saturday.
Likely to occur in spring or fall.	More likely to occur in the summer.
More likely to occur between 6:00 and 11:59am.	More likely to occur between late pm., early am.
Firearms are main method.	Greater variety of methods.
Few attempts precede suicide.	Many attempts precede suicide.

- Provides outlet for flight or fight response
- May also take you of stress-provoking situations
- Problem-focused Coping
 - Cognitive appraisal (use problem solving)
 - Time Management/Assertiveness (saying “no”)



Resources:

- www.cdc.gov
- <http://www.farmersguardian.com/>

Monthly Blast written by SW Ag Center Outreach Education Coordinator, Nykole Kafka Vance, MS, CEP.

Sharing is caring!



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