

DEALING WITH STRESS

Stress affects your body, mind and spirit
it's important to take care of all of these aspects.

1. Look after your own body

- Get regular exercise
- Eat right – try to maintain a healthy and steady body weight
- Smoking is unhealthy
- Monitor your own alcohol use and cut back if necessary
- Learn to identify your own symptoms of stress
- Use relaxation techniques that work for you
- Get regular, deep sleep for at least 8 hours per night
- Take care of workplace safety



2. Look after your mind

- Monitor what you say to yourself
- Get connected; build networks of support around yourself
- Take regular daily breaks and longer breaks off farm
- Speak up, talk to someone (a friend, family, your pastor...)
- Visit your health professional
- Do something that you enjoy doing – and start doing things you enjoyed doing before



3. Cultivate and maintain a healthy spirit

- This is not about religion, but for some it is
- Connect to nature
- Become part of something larger than yourself
- Help others – reach out

Brochure compiled for dairy farmers by Dr Neels Botha (AgResearch) as part of a DairyNZ funded farmer wellness and wellbeing project

FARMER WELLNESS AND WELLBEING THE FACTS

You know how to look after cows and grass but do you know how to look after yourself?

Consider the following facts:

- everyday 13 people will be seriously injured on farms
- every 18 days 1 farm worker dies
- each year one in seven claims to ACC will be for injuries sustained by farmers, their employees, contractors or visitors
- 46.6% of the population are predicted to meet criteria for a mental disorder at some time in their lives
- New Zealanders have high levels of anxiety, mood and substance abuse disorders
- one out of two farmers seek help when they feel stressed
- every two weeks a farmer completes suicide
- 98% of farmers believe they are fine mentally while 17% actually have symptoms of stress, depression or anxiety
- 39% of farmers are concerned that they are losing the ability to keep up with the physical demands of farm work
- 41% of farmers who consume alcohol said they drank more than they meant to in the previous year



If you are not feeling mentally okay, it gets in the way of your business, work and relationships with family, friends and farm staff - and it can be dangerous.

For more information txt or call me on **029 838 5106**; email me @ neels.botha@agresearch.co.nz or visit www.ndi.org.nz



How do you know if you are stressed, burnt out, depressed or anxious?

Stress and burnout

Most people tend to over-engage when they are *distressed* and their emotions are over-reactive. Stress gives you a strong sense of urgency and creates hyperactivity. This can lead to loss of energy and anxiety issues. The primary damage of stress is physical and it can kill you prematurely. When you have *burnout*, you become disengaged and your emotions are blunted. You may lose your motivation, ideals and hope and you become detached and depressed. The primary damage of burnout is emotional and it may not seem worth living when you suffer from burnout.

Depression

Feeling down in response to difficult situations is pretty normal, and usually the feelings fade over time. But when the feelings of unhappiness are intense and persistent - and they don't go away even when things improve - this could be depression (Ministry of Health, 2009). Men tend to 'tough it out' when they are stressed and symptoms of depression are often overlooked because they can be different to the symptoms typically found in women. Men with depression may feel blue or may not get pleasure from activities they once enjoyed. Other symptoms commonly show up in men that may not be recognised as depression: escapist behaviour, such as spending a lot of time at work or playing sports; alcohol or substance abuse; controlling, violent or abusive behaviour; inappropriate anger; risky behaviour, such as reckless driving; and infidelity or unhealthy sexual relationships. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide.

Anxiety

Our brains naturally respond to situations it recognises as threatening. It is not the same for everyone but typical symptoms of anxiety are: faster heartbeat, chest pains, indigestion, dry mouth, forgetfulness, shaking, and so on. Acute stress symptoms usually go away; if they do not, it becomes chronic. It can lead to burnout, fatigue, weakness, and depression. It can also kill prematurely through high blood pressure, stroke or heart attack.

A quick self test

The following test is accurate for identifying potential *depression* or *anxiety* issues. For each statement circle the numbered boxes below. Add the total score for the 1st two questions; then for the 2nd pair of questions. A score of three or more for the first two questions signals potential issues with depression and a score of three or more for the last two questions signals potential anxiety issues. **You should visit your health professional if this is the case.**

<i>Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?</i>	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	0	1	2	3
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2	3
Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3