

Managing Stress

What is stress?

Stress is a normal part of life and can be both positive and negative. 'Stress' is what goes on inside us when we react to frustration, conflict and pressure. We each respond differently to stress, depending on our perceptions. Stress generally affects everyone in five basic ways.

1. Physiologically (ie headaches and frequent illness, backache)
2. Emotionally (ie anger, anxiety)
3. Behaviourally (ie irritability, drinking too much alcohol)
4. Cognitively (ie inability to make decisions, memory loss)
5. Self concept (ie "I am a failure")

Why is stress management important to farm family businesses?

People can feel overwhelmed with concerns over pressures on farms. Situations that require adjustment are often stressful. Management of stress is important for farm family businesses in terms of its impact on farm business productivity and decision making, farm family interactions and on family members physical and mental well-being.

What does stress management include?

Successful management of stress comes from practice and looking at how you perceive the events causing the stress. Here are some suggestions for coping with stress.

- Admit that stress is having an affect on you. No-one is stress free
- Make a commitment to take care of yourself and accept responsibility for your overall health and well-being including adequate rest and relaxation.
- Ask yourself if you have control over what is happening or not. Often we worry about things over which we have no control. Know the difference between what you can and cannot change (ie the weather)
- Talk out your troubles. Find someone to talk to about your worries or frustrations such as your spouse, friends, clergy or counsellors. Even talking 'over the fence' to your neighbours will help share the problem and relieve the pressure.
- Work out your tensions. Exercise is good to handle pressure.
- Take care of your body. Get adequate rest, nutrition and exercise.
- Pay attention to physical and emotional signs of stress including fatigue, carelessness, apathy and vague aches and pains. Have a medical check up, as physical condition affects a persons outlook on life.
- Socialise. Spending time with others who understand what you are going through can be very helpful. It helps to know that others feel the same way you do. Have neighbours over for coffee or an evening of cards. It is important to be with people.
- Solve problems. Rather than worrying about what did or might happen, concentrate on finding solutions. More problems go unresolved by no decision than the wrong decision.
- Don't forget why you chose this way of life.

You need to get help when stress goes on for too long, is too severe or interferes with your day to day functioning.

Sometimes the stress becomes unbearable. If this does happen, don't hesitate to seek professional assistance for yourself or a member of your family from your local GP.