



Farm Safety, Stress & Mental Health during Covid-19

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Without question, Covid-19 impacts every business, individual & family in the community. Stress levels on the farm were high prior to coronavirus emergence. Farmers face uncertainty in many areas of their business, with little or no control over the weather, markets, input costs, tariffs & feel “the pressure of producing more food with minimal impact on the environment” (grinnellmutual.com). They often face time-pressures with a short window of time to plant, to ship livestock, poultry, or goods, mitigate weeds &/or harvest. Their long hours interfere with sleep & caring for self that impacts safety. The spread of coronavirus has impacted the food chain in its spread to employees of meat packing plants. The worry of health & economic future can become overwhelming.

It is more important than ever for farmers, families & employees to stay well physically & mentally. The South Central Health Care Coalition has provided Farm Health & Safety Tips during Covid-19 that follow the guidelines of the CDC & MDH.

“Social Distancing”. While this may seem easy when “on the farm” the production of crops, livestock /poultry involves teamwork. There are many farm partners who visit the farm in delivery, agronomy, sales, contractors, insurance & truck drivers. Practice social distance at all times by keeping a 6-foot distance in your home, field & sheds. Ride single in your cabs. Use the technology of your phone to text work plans, take a picture of parts, call ahead to implement dealer & when possible pick up outside door. Limit non-essential visitors.

“Keep Yourself & Your Equipment Clean”. Wash hands frequently & keep sanitizing supplies handy, especially before & after meals & after activities with others. Wipe down frequently touched objects such as work stations, countertops, door knobs, refrigerator doors, steering wheels, pens, fuel tank covers. Keep shower areas clean, do not share towels. Do not touch face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

Have a plan if case you get sick. Write down a contingency plan should you, a family member or worker becomes sick. Share the plan with the people involved.

Mental Health. Take care of your body & take care of mental health. Everyone reacts to stress differently. The CDC website has excellent information on stress & coping during Covid-19. Taking care of yourself, your family, your friends, helps you cope with stress. Healthy coping mechanisms make you stronger. Focus on things you can control. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals. Take deep breaths, stretch aching or over-worked muscles. Walk or exercise regularly. Avoid watching or reading stressful news stories. Do things that you enjoy. Avoid excessive alcohol. Work on getting adequate sleep. Socialize with phone calls, Facetime or Zoom. Connect with others you trust.

Mental Health Resources:

CDC.gov/coronavirus “Mental Health & Coping During Covid-19.

Google “psyberguide.org” provides multiple App sites for self-help & stress-reduction at the touch of your phone.

If you feel overwhelmed, anxious, or can’t sleep - talk to someone. Don’t wait. Call your primary care provider for help or referral.

The Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 833-600-2670. It is at no cost & confidential.

Minnesota Rural Mental Health Specialists: Ted Matthews: 320-266-2390, Monica McConkey: 218-280-7785 Ted and Monica work with farmers throughout Minnesota. No cost; no paperwork. While you are welcome to contact either Monica or Ted, Monica generally serves the area north of Highway 12 (which runs from Ortonville through Willmar to the Twin Cities) and Ted generally serves the area south of Highway 12.