



OPINION

Stress Down On The Farm

We like to think that people who live on top of each other in the city need to get out to our farm country to find relief from their stress. But with the economic squeeze placed on farmers these days, we've got some stress right down on the farm. And these stresses are not reserved only for the marginal farmer or poor managers.

In the study of Farm Families Facing Financial Stress, Harold Capener, Professor of Rural Sociology at Cornell University called these farm families the "Cream of the crop". Unlike many of the farmers who left farming during the last 20 years, these farmers in the study were capable and dedicated. They had very promising children. They were social, civic and religious leaders in their communities. Often they got into farming or expanded their farm operation a few years ago when everything looked promising. Now when the economy has changed they find themselves highly leveraged and under financial stress.

Not all farmers handle stress alike. Some farmers feel challenged by problems and others fear them. According to James E. Van Horn, Family Sociology Extension Specialist at Penn State, the major reasons for different reactions to stress are a farmer's perception of the situation, his tolerance of how much stress he can live with and his skills for strategies on how to cope with the stress.

How events are interpreted will affect the reaction to stress. In order for stress to occur, the farmer must see or perceive the situation as stressful in the first place. Stress is "in the eye of the perceiver." For example, one farmer may view a broken arm as annoying and a major setback to production. Another farmer may see himself or herself as a very fortunate person in that nothing more than the arm was broken.

A farmer's feelings on a particular problem depend on his or her whole belief system. If a farmer views farming as unrewarding, each new stress is viewed in this light and seen as adding one new element to the already troublesome burden. However, if farming is seen as basically challenging and rewarding, stresses will be viewed as less severe.

Stress tolerance refers to a farmer's capacity to withstand stress or the amount of stress the farmer can tolerate before abilities are seriously impaired. Farmers differ greatly in the amount and types of stress, both physical and mental, they can handle. Prolonged exertion and fatigue that would be only mildly stressful to a young farmer may prove very difficult for an older farmer or someone with a heart

defect. Emergencies, delays, and other problems that a confident farmer can take in stride may be a stumbling block for one who feels less confident or more troubled.

Coping with stress or solving a problem involving stress will depend on the skills the farmer has to solve it, according to Van Horn. The greater the skill, the less severe the stress. A well-trained farmer may be able to turn a profit even in the most marginal of situations; whereas one with less training may not be able to manage as successfully and become hopelessly frustrated.

But the farmer's actual level of skill is not the whole story—the way a farmer views his or her capabilities is important too. If the farmer feels generally self-confident and expects to solve a problem successfully, the stress will not be as severe even if it is a difficult problem. Skills also include those healthy things a farmer can do when feeling stressed. We may not think of "taking a walk" as being much of a skill, but it is when we are dealing with a stressful situation. The skill is "learning from past experiences to get away from a stressful problem for 20 or 30 minutes." The farmer says "I must take a walk, relax and clear my head." That's the skill part of walking.

Stress management consists of activities or strategies that assist farmers in avoiding unnecessary stress or coping with it. It also helps the farmer to better withstand the pressures and conflicts which are an inevitable part of life.

There is no "one and only" method of managing stress. Farmers should use a variety of ways to deal with stress.

Farmers who are successful stress managers seem to share these characteristics:

- Self-awareness—they know their strengths, skills, and weaknesses. They plan for the future. "They never bite off more than they can chew."

- A variety of techniques—they utilize many stress-reducing techniques as the situation dictates.

- Many interests—they are able to draw on several sources for personal satisfaction—hobbies, recreation, family.

- Have active and productive habits—they make things happen, they practice stress management during the bad and good times.

- Support—they develop friendships with others for help and comfort during periods of stress.

One way to manage your psychological and physical well-being is to have people you can turn to for emotional support. This support might come from family, church members, friends, or other farmers who have experienced the



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

To Be Aware of Fly Build-up

There is considerable increase in fly population in many of our operations this spring. One of the reasons is the build-up of resistance to materials presently used.

Your fly control program should integrate several different control techniques and insecticides, if you are going to be successful. Flies will become resistant to a particular insecticide if exposed to the same material several times in succession. Resistance to the synthetic pyrethroids (Ectiban, Atroban, Hard Hitter, etc.) has already been shown.

Some of our poultry producers have found that flies are more tolerant to Larvadex than they

were a year or two ago. For best results, use a wide variety of insecticide formulations (space sprays, mist sprays, baits, residual sprays, etc.) and different classes of insecticides (synthetic pyrethroids, carbamates and organophosphates). In fact, Dr. Clarence Collison, entomologist at Penn State, suggests that if you have not used a material for two or three years, you may want to give it a try again.

In addition to using appropriate insecticides when necessary, it is important to develop an effective manure management program to keep the number of fly breeding sites to a minimum.

To Practice Bio-Security

Livestock and poultry diseases continue to be a threat to farmers. I still believe that in too many cases the farmer brings the infection home to his own animals and poultry. Are you careful about the footwear worn when attending the public stock yards or sales barns? Most of these places are an outlet for animals with some infection; the chances of picking up these organisms on your boots or shoes are great. Even though the public places are often disinfected, there is still danger of infection.

We urge farmers to be very careful with their sanitary habits. The same is true when using public trucks to transport animals; be sure they are clean and well

disinfected. Don't be guilty of bringing home infection to your own animals.

To Clip Pastures

Mowing permanent pastures at this time of year is a very good idea. Many of the plants will be heading out and some will go to seed; this means that the plants should be mowed to help control weeds and to encourage new growth of grass.

Livestock will consume the dry clippings. Pastures should be clipped several times during the season. In addition, the clipped area will look much better to the general public as they travel through the country.

To Reduce Rural Crime

Rural crime has become a sad fact of life. Most facts and figures that we read indicate an increase in rural crime. There are many things you can do to "make crime more trouble than it's worth." That would include installing and using locks, bringing your equipment inside, or putting it in a well-lighted area at night. Also, do not keep loading chutes near gates. One of the most important things you can do is to establish "crime watch" with your neighbors.

You also may be able to borrow an engraving tool from your local police department to mark your equipment with your driver's license number. Do not use your Social Security number because it is not retrievable.

FARM FORUM OUR READERS WRITE

Dear Editor:

I have read and seen a lot about the vanishing American farmer. But what I can't understand is why they, the farmers, try and stand alone during these troubled times.

My family and I were not born or raised on a farm, but we always wanted a farm. About seven years ago we bought what would be a gentlemen's farm. We have 13 brood sows and we sell our piglets to our neighbor. We would love to go full-time but as with anything, financially we couldn't.

The point I'm trying to make is why can't farmers work together as a group? They could buy land together, share equipment, rotate investment in planting seasons, and share the bounty, which to me, would bring overhead way down.

I would like to see an in-depth survey taken and an in-depth article on this subject. I think Lancaster Farming is a great newspaper but don't forget we are not all dairy farmers. Some of us are pork producers.

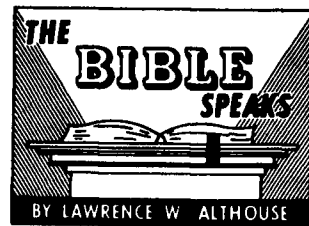
I believe we are our brothers keeper, but I also think the American farmer has forgotten about that.

If the American farmer doesn't form a solidarity among themselves, the big conglomerates who buy all these farms will take over.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Cossmay

kind of stress you are experiencing. Since emotional support involves give-and-take, try to check yourself when you begin to withdraw or become angry and defensive. Try to support other people in addition to receiving support from them. Support comes



THE "ONLY" COMPLEX

June 1, 1986

Background Scripture: Jeremiah 1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 139: 1-6.

When God has something for us to do, it seems we are almost always "only" something — "only one person," "only a layperson," "only an ordinary person," and so on. Called to be God's prophet, Jeremiah responded with "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (1:6). Moses had been

in many forms. A brief "chat" with a friend may be all that you or your friend needs.

Diet influences a person's ability to cope with stress. Elevated blood cholesterol levels, combined with hypertension or high blood pressure, increase your chances of stroke and heart attack.

Caffeine stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and may promote even more nervousness and tension. Be moderate in your consumption of coffee, tea, soft drinks, and drugs containing caffeine.

Although alcohol and drugs are common ways of dealing with stress, they can be addictive and tend to affect or "treat" only the symptoms of the problems. They mask the cause of stress without

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"only" an 80-year-old man: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 4:11). Isaiah had been "only" an unworthy man: "Woe is me...for I am a man of unclean lips..." (Isaiah 6:5).

BEYOND "ONLY"

None of these responses — nor those that you and I make when God needs us — are untrue so far as they go. Yes, we are too young, too old, too unworthy, and all the rest. But when God has a job for us to do, he makes it clear that there is something beyond the "only" facts of our lives. God gave Moses the *something else* he needed for his task; Isaiah, too. And to a quivering Jeremiah he said: "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for I am all to whom I send you you shall go..." (1:7).

By ourselves we may not be able to do what he wants. But, we are not by ourselves: "Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you..." (1:8). God never calls us to a task which is impossible, because he always offers himself with that call: "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth" (1:9).

At this point you may be saying to yourself, "Well, that's nice to know if God ever calls me to do something (Of course, I've been around for some time and he hasn't asked me to do anything yet!)." Don't you believe it! If you're old enough to read these words, you're old enough to have gotten God's call to do lots of somethings. The problem is probably, not that he hasn't called you, but that you haven't been listening. I can say that, not because I know you, but because I know that God doesn't bring anyone in this world for a free ride. There's always something to do for God.

IN THE WOMB

God told Jeremiah that his call to the prophecy was something that had been in the picture from the very beginning: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet." (1:5). What God said to Jeremiah, I believe he says to each of us. We may not be called to be prophets, but we are each of us created for a purpose — God's purpose — and we cannot ever be really satisfied until we have discovered that purpose and set ourselves to make it a reality.

God made you for a purpose, too. Do you know what it is? Don't let the "only" complex get in the way.

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