

AWARENESS: Farm Stress Inventory

Farming has ongoing situations that cause stress. Common farm stressors are finances, daily hassles, and lack of control over the weather, heavy work overloads, and conflict in relationships.

Complete the following inventory to identify your stressors.

1=low stress - 5=high stress.

1	Sudden and significant increase in debt load	1 2 3 4 5
2	Significant production loss due to disease or pests	1 2 3 4 5
3	Insufficient regular cash flow to meet financial obligations or for daily necessities	1 2 3 4 5
4	Delay in planting or harvesting due to weather	1 2 3 4 5
5	Media distortions of farm situation	1 2 3 4 5
6	Low commodity prices	1 2 3 4 5
7	Significant changes in type or size of farming operation	1 2 3 4 5
8	Meeting with mortgagee for additional loan	1 2 3 4 5
9	Purchase of major machinery, facility or livestock	1 2 3 4 5
10	Not being considered part of the farm business by others	1 2 3 4 5
11	Taking an off-farm job to meet expenses	1 2 3 4 5
12	Prolonged bad weather	1 2 3 4 5
13	Problems with weeds or insects	1 2 3 4 5
14	Machinery breakdown at a critical time	1 2 3 4 5
15	Not enough time to spend with spouse	1 2 3 4 5
16	Crop loss due to weather	1 2 3 4 5
17	Illness during planting/harvesting	1 2 3 4 5
18	Deciding when to sell	1 2 3 4 5
19	Rising expenses	1 2 3 4 5
20	Government policies and regulations	1 2 3 4 5
21	Concerns about the continued financial viability of the farm	1 2 3 4 5

Farm Stress Inventory (Continued)

22	Having a loan request turned down	1 2 3 4 5
23	Farming related accident	1 2 3 4 5
24	Government trade policies	1 2 3 4 5
25	Government “cheap food” policies	1 2 3 4 5
26	Breeding or reproductive difficulties with livestock	1 2 3 4 5
27	No farm help or loss of help when needed	1 2 3 4 5
28	Need to learn/adjust to new government regulations and policies	1 2 3 4 5
29	Not enough time for child rearing	1 2 3 4 5
30	Increased work load at peak times	1 2 3 4 5
31	Unplanned interruptions	1 2 3 4 5
32	Use of hazardous chemicals on the farm	1 2 3 4 5
33	Dealing with salespeople	1 2 3 4 5
34	Long work hours	1 2 3 4 5
35	Few holidays away from the farm	1 2 3 4 5
36	Feeling isolated on the farm	1 2 3 4 5
37	Having to travel long distances for services, shopping and health care	1 2 3 4 5
38	Pressure of having too much to do in too little time	1 2 3 4 5
39	Keeping up with new technology and products	1 2 3 4 5
40	Worrying about market conditions	1 2 3 4 5
41	Having to make decisions without all the necessary information	1 2 3 4 5
42	Being expected to work on the farm as well as manage the house	1 2 3 4 5
43	Worrying about owing money	1 2 3 4 5
44	Worrying about keeping the farm in the family/farm succession	1 2 3 4 5
45	Not seeing enough people	1 2 3 4 5

46	Not having enough money or time for entertainment and recreation	1 2 3 4 5
47	Death of parent or member of immediate family	1 2 3 4 5
48	Death of a friend	1 2 3 4 5
49	Problems balancing work and family responsibilities	1 2 3 4 5
50	Problems with farm succession planning	1 2 3 4 5
51	Divorce or marital separation	1 2 3 4 5
52	Problems with a partnership	1 2 3 4 5
53	Daughter or son leaving home	1 2 3 4 5
54	Trouble with parents or in-laws	1 2 3 4 5
55	Conflict with spouse over spending priorities	1 2 3 4 5
56	Major decisions being made without your knowledge or input	1 2 3 4 5
57	Having to wear too many hats, e.g. farmer, spouse, mother, son etc.	1 2 3 4 5
58	Surface rights negotiations e.g. coal seam gas, mining, gravel	1 2 3 4 5
59	Other recent events which have had an impact on your life	1 2 3 4 5

INVENTORY SCORE:

Putting Your SCORE in Perspective:

If the majority of your scores are 4 or 5:

- It is important to devote immediate attention to stress management. Give yourself credit for the tough times you have survived. Long term stress depletes your internal resources. It is common to identify with these farm stresses in your operation. Remember there are people who will listen and help brainstorm ways to cope. For help, please refer to the back pages of this resource book for local contacts. There is no shame in talking to someone about your concerns.

If the majority of your scores are 3:

- Focus on your stress management strengths. Continue to expand your coping skills. Set goals that allow you to take control of what is controllable on your farm. The skills you are using and those you will develop can help you to deal with uncontrollable situations that arise.

If the majority of your scores are 1 and 2:

- You have stress coping skills. Share your skills with others. Farming will continue to challenge you, so continue to communicate, prioritise daily tasks and support your family, friends, workers and community in difficult times.

Keep in mind that the average farmer is experiencing more stress than observed in other occupations; so even an average level of farm stress may be too much!

AWARENESS: WHAT CAN I CONTROL...

Stress cannot be cured but it can be handled. A farmer cannot control outside forces that affect the farm and family but a farmer can control how they handle stress.

Events

- **Plan ahead.** Don't procrastinate. Replace worn machinery parts and complete maintenance during down times rather than when the equipment is needed in the paddock.
- **Use your time efficiently.** Set priorities and work at tasks accordingly. Remember there are only so many things that you can do in a day.
- **Prior to stressful seasons.** Shearing, seeding, harvesting – delegate and plan who will take care of the everyday jobs.
- **Learn to say NO to extra commitments.** There is only one you. Take care of yourself so you can fulfil present commitments.