

FS287 (Revised June 2022)



# Farm/Ranch Stress Management Plan

## Planning to Reduce Stress

Individuals and families involved in farming and ranching experience many of the same stresses that others do, such as rising food or energy costs. In addition, they face additional stresses such as machinery breakdowns, unpredictable weather conditions, and the heavy pressures that go along with planting and harvesting.

However, by meeting together and planning ahead, those involved in agriculture and its ups and downs can be proactive and reduce much of the stress that they feel. The final fact sheet in this series outlines nine steps to create a farm/ranch stress management plan that will work effectively for you. Take time to sit down, discuss your stress concerns, and fill out the steps in this plan so you can reduce stress and improve health and relationships.

## Steps in Your Plan

- 1. The **specific stressful problem** we want to work on or solve is (example – our short tempers during harvest time, etc.):

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- 2. The **roadblocks and barriers** to solving this problem are (example – not taking time to notice symptoms early and to think before yelling or arguing):

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- 3. Some **early warning symptoms** of this stressful problem are (example – family arguments, Dad's neckaches, Mom withdrawing, etc.):

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- 4. Some **stress relief methods** that work well for us or we might want to try (example – neck rubs, talking about the pressures, etc.):

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Reviewed and revised by: **Sean Brotherson**,  
Family Science Specialist, NDSU Extension

*Families in farming or ranching can minimize stress if they plan ahead. Creating a stress management plan is a useful step in that process. Using the nine steps outlined in this fact sheet, family members can tailor a plan to fit their situation and needs.*

5. Some **possible ways we could solve the problem** identified in step #1 are:

- By controlling **events** (example – postponing daughter’s elective surgery until after the harvest season):

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- By controlling **our attitudes** (example – the worst that would happen if we didn’t get this field’s hay baled by nightfall is that our hay would get wet – and we’ve managed worse problems):

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- By controlling **responses** (example – instead of using our usual “you did X” statements to blame each other, we could use “I statements,” such as “I would like X,” to ask directly for what we want or need):

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- By **using available resources** (example – asking a family member for a neck massage before falling asleep at night):

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6. We are aware that we know ourselves better than anyone else. So, if we were to **write the best prescription available** to cure the problem identified in Step #1, we would plan (example – take 15 minutes daily to plan, talk and reconnect during harvest time):

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7. The **personal benefit** we’ll get from using our plan is (example – we’ll eliminate the distress of being short-tempered with each other during harvest season):

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8. The **key tasks** we’ll have to do for our plan to work include (example – we’ll need to remind one another to think before yelling, to ask for what we want directly instead of blaming, and schedule daily time for discussion):

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9. A way we’ll make sure we get a **reward for our new behavior** is (example – when we reduce our number of arguments, we’ll express a verbal “Thank you” daily and take ourselves out for a nice meal once a week):

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## Follow-Up to Your Plan

After you have put your plan into action for a week or two, you might meet together again to evaluate your progress and perhaps revise your plan or set up a new one to solve another farm/ranch stress problem.

### Key Resources for Farm Stress

- **NDSU Extension** – Farm/Ranch Stress Resources: [www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/ag-topics/farm-safety-health/managing-stress](http://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/ag-topics/farm-safety-health/managing-stress)
- **North Dakota Dept. of Agriculture** – [www.nd.gov/ndda](http://www.nd.gov/ndda)
- **North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center** – [www.farmstress.org](http://www.farmstress.org)
- **FirstLink Help Line** (24-hour helpline, services, referral) – Call 2-1-1 or go to [www.myfirstlink.org](http://www.myfirstlink.org)
- **Together Counseling LLC** – Offers in-person and telehealth farm-to-farm counseling services; counselors have farming backgrounds. Cost coverage available as needed. Call 701-404-0997 or go to [www.togethercounselinggroup.com/farm-to-farm](http://www.togethercounselinggroup.com/farm-to-farm)
- **North Dakota Regional Human Service Centers** – Counseling services available statewide. Go to [www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc/)
- **North Dakota Behavioral Health Supports** – To access mental and behavioral health supports in North Dakota, go to [www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov](http://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov)
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (available 24 hours/day) – Call 9-8-8 or call/text 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).
- In an emergency, call **911**.

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Original publication by Robert J. Fetsch, Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Colorado State University

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