



LKL Safety Note

Mental health support – Ask twice

It is recognised that 1 in 4 people can suffer from mental health illness at some time in their life.

Farming can be a rewarding but also at times inherently stressful business with long hours, periods of lone working and not always much time for social interaction. It is therefore common for people to have periods of depression or feeling of not being able to cope.

Remember depression is an illness not a weakness

Those who work in farming and other rural businesses are often reluctant to seek support for depression, stress or anxiety. However, talking about your problems and seeking appropriate help can make it easier to cope and improves your quality of life.

"Milking the cows always had to happen, regardless of whether it was Christmas Day and the Queen's speech was on or if a family member had died or was in hospital," - said James Hoskins when talking about when he threw himself into work when facing a number of family bereavements. When he eventually was forced to sell the family farm he realised afterward that he was suffering from poor mental health and reached out to groups on social media.

"Talking about it helped me realise that something wasn't right and it helped me to find something that would keep me happier in the future," he said.

Being self aware of how you are feeling can help identify when something is not right. It can also help you identify any ill health concerns you may have for family, friends and colleagues and enable you to care and reach out to them and to direct them to the professional help that they might need. It can be as simple as knowing how someone normally approaches their working day to help you identify when something isn't quite right.

One of our Regional Managers shared a story of an LKL colleague who was requested to help dry off some cows on a neighbouring farm. He had received a call from his friend saying that he was very tired and under time pressure and wondered if he was able to go and help dry off the cows. He went over and expected to find in excess of 30 cows to dry off but in fact there were only 2. He had previously known his friend to be exceptionally efficient with huge energy for his work - so knew something must be wrong, as it was so unlike him. He decided to ask him gently over a coffee if he was ok and was able to encourage him to make a GP appointment that week and get help.

What to do if you are worried about someone

If someone close to you is showing signs of depression this is what you can do: -

[Listen to their concerns](#)

Getting things off their chest may help to ease their immediate stress. Telling them "everything will be ok" or "pull yourself together" is **NOT** helpful.

[Be supportive and non-judgmental](#)

Although you might not be able to provide direct help, offer them comfort and reassurance.

[Take advice yourself on how to help](#)

Find out more about stress and depression.

[Respect their confidence](#)

Someone who is depressed may have trouble opening up about their problem so it's important they feel they can trust you.

[Most importantly, encourage them to seek professional help](#)

Offer to go with them if they would find it helpful.

[As a partner or friend, you can advise their GP if you are concerned about their health](#)

The GP cannot discuss their patient with you but your information might be useful.

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Ask twice is a simple thing we can all do to break through the mask that people with mental illness wear, to hide what they're truly feeling, (because they don't feel they're "allowed" to share, and if they do, they're at risk of being told they're making it up or told to 'man up'!)

Asking twice allows people to choose to take off the mask, because you've shown you're pretty much capable of seeing through it anyway, and you want to listen to what they have to say.



How to recognise the signs of poor mental health – (Yourself and others)

There are many stress warnings that we may recognise in ourselves, family, or our friends and neighbours. These may be cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioural and often include a number of the following: -

Moodiness, irritability or short temper, Poor judgment, inability to relax, Feeling overwhelmed, Sense of loneliness or isolation
General unhappiness, seeing only the negative
Anxious or Constant worrying, isolating themselves from others, procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities.

Useful websites: -

<https://farmwell.org.uk/ahdb-mental-wellbeing-webinars/> ; <https://www.manup.how/>

If you think someone is in crisis and having suicidal thoughts, please **ACT immediately**

If you are concerned about someone, asking directly about suicide is not dangerous. It may help save a life. People often find relief in being able to talk openly about their thoughts and feelings of suicide.

ASK and ACT

Contact their GP and inform them that it is urgent

Call the Samaritans on 116 123

Samaritans provide help and emotional support 24/7 to anyone who needs support. If you are worried about someone, they can give you support too. You do not have to give your name. www.samaritans.org

Worried about someone? Please remember:

TRACTOR FACTS to save a life...

- T**ell the person you're worried about them
- R**eaching out to someone in distress could save a life – **listen in a non-judgemental way**
- A**sking if they are thinking of suicide or ending their life is not easy, but if a person has a plan and the means to take their own life, they need urgent help
- C**are – stay with them
- T**ry to stay **calm and supportive**
- O**ffer to help them: to call their GP, take them to A&E or contact the police.
(See the list of helplines on this card)
- R**emove the means – keys to chemical stores, firearms, drugs...

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