

8 Ways to Deal With A Stressed Out Farmer

Okay, we know farming is not easy and there can be significant stresses. Farming is like a rollercoaster.—volatility is the only constant. Not only are commodity prices down, but on our farm, we struggled with some terrible animal health issues a couple months ago. Now, the weather finally feels like spring and we are trying to plant a crop. But, it's not going well.

Planting, or the lack thereof, has been frustrating

Locally, we have received a substantial amount of precipitation. First, it was heavy, wet snow. Lots of it. And it was cold. We had the latest ice out date on our local lakes. Now, the temperatures finally feel like spring, but our soils are saturated. And you can't plant on wet soils. We did manage to plant one day—on one of our driest farms. Then . . . it rained 1.5 inches last night, further saturating the wet ground we already have. On top of that, the forecast is for 100% chance of rain two days from now.

It. just. doesn't. stop.

Late Planting

So what does it mean for late plantings? The first crop we plant in the spring is corn since it has the longest maturity time. We choose a specific corn type that has the longest maturation date as our first corn to plant because the yield on this type of corn is typically higher. Now that we have passed the latest date for that particular corn type, we now have to change to a different corn type. Do you know how deflating and frustrating it is knowing that before you put seeds in the ground, you have already taken a yield hit?

So . . . How do you handle the stress?

Let's take a look at how to deal with a stressed out farmer. Having farmed for 40 years, we have been down this road before.

1. Keep telling yourself the situation is out of your control. And, then tell yourself again, "it's out of your control." And repeat, if necessary. And along with that message, talk about your frustrations—what is happening on your farm. And if you need to repeat yourself, go right ahead. *Just keep talking.* (Believe me, I have heard a lot of repeated frustrations lately, over and over.)

2. Understand tensions are high. Things that normally don't bother you, will bother you. You may lash out. Take a deep breath. It's going to be okay. Keep your priorities straight. Count your

blessings. Remind yourself of the big picture of life. *What is really important?*

3. Keep busy. This may mean to fix things on the farm that you may normally wait on. Even if it's just little things. It's therapeutic, trust me.
4. Make sure you are rested. Take care of yourself. Eat properly.
5. Get off the farm. Or take a walk, Or go to a movie. Or go out to eat. Better yet, invite some other farmer friends and go out to eat. And talk about it (yes, refer to #1). Whatever you do, don't isolate yourself.
6. Keep your humor. Laugh at yourself. Laugh at your circumstances—even if it's inappropriate. It may seem inappropriate. Give yourself permission. It's okay and good for you to laugh, even if it makes *absolutely no sense*.
7. Do something you enjoy. And if you have to, tell yourself it's okay to do something you enjoy. Sometimes you just need to talk to yourself.
8. And pray. There just are things that are completely out of your control. Don't shoulder the burden. Pass it on to God.

If these don't work, there are professionals that can help. Please reach out and use them. Don't let the stress eat at you. Contact your state Department of Agriculture. For Minnesota, please contact Ted Matthews 320-266-2390.

I wish farming was not so stressful. If consumers only knew what farmers go through to put food on their table, they would have a renewed respect for farmers. The sacrifices we make are beyond what most people can imagine. But we love what we do. Yes, there are days we want to just throw in the towel. And logic tells us we probably should some days. But farmers persevere. You can't be a farmer unless you do. But we have our limits too.

We can only believe that better days are ahead. That's what keeps us going . . .

More Mental Health Sources for Farmers:

[Stress and Farming – Coping Tips](#)

[Managing Farm Stress](#)

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