

Ask in Earnest



**Candid and Compassionate Conversations about Suicide
for the Farm and Ranch Community**

Preventing Farm/Ranch Suicides and Assisting Those Left Behind
North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center
November 30, 2021



Candid and Compassionate Conversations



- I. What We Know about Farming and Suicide
- II. Risk Factors
- III. Suicide Myths
- IV. Action Steps to Save Lives
- V. Assisting Those Left Behind
- VI. Q&A









What We Know

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report
 - 2016
 - 2020
- Rural v. urban suicide rate
- Suicide increase 1999-2019 (CDC Aug 2021)
- Wasn't it worse in the 1980's?
- Every 33 hours and every 11 minutes

What We Know

- Not only America's Farmers:
 - Australia
 - United Kingdom
 - France
 - India
- One suicide impacts 147; even more in rural communities
- We need to take action now to save lives

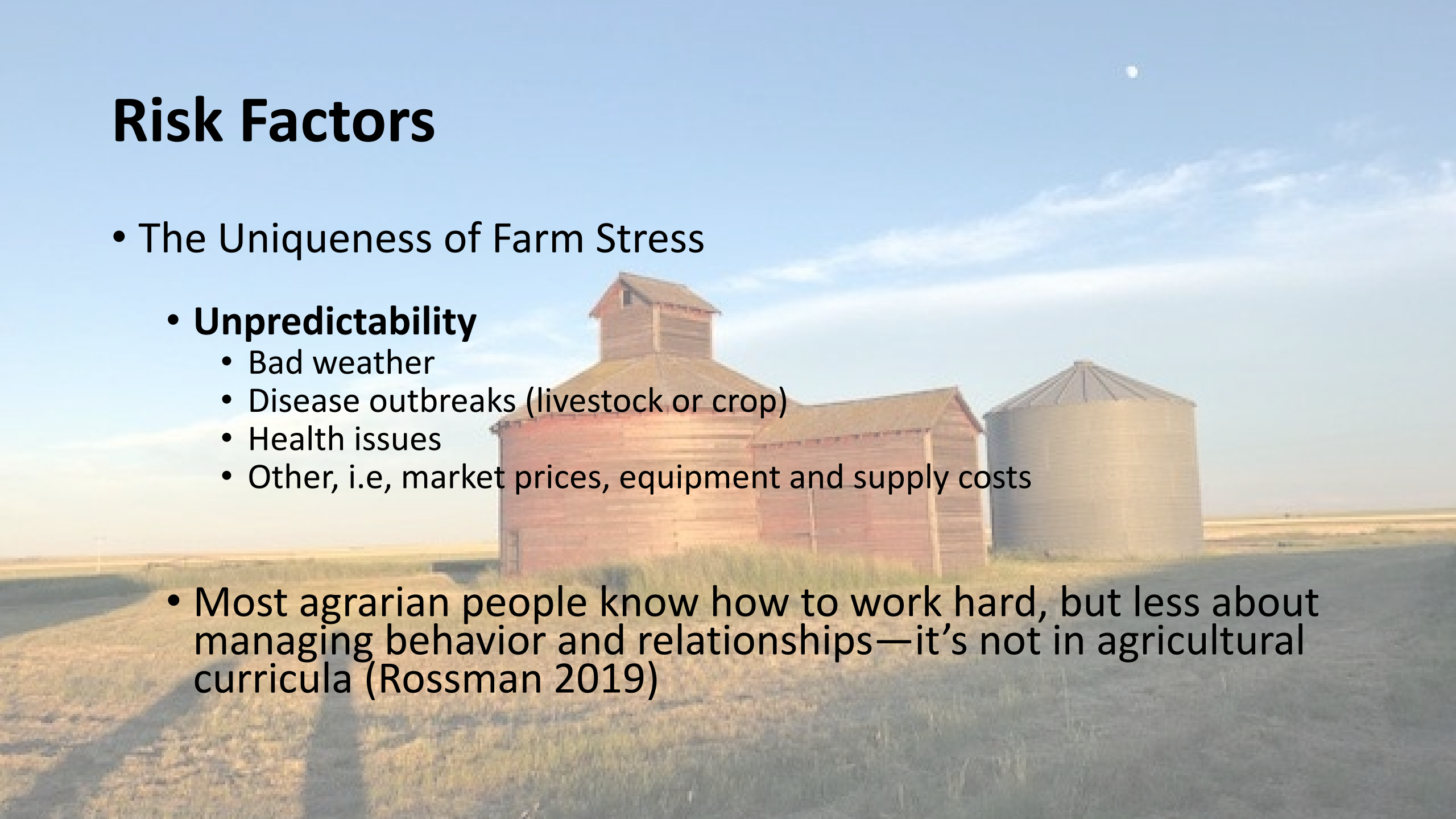
Risk Factors

- The Uniqueness of Farm Stress

- **Unpredictability**

- Bad weather
 - Disease outbreaks (livestock or crop)
 - Health issues
 - Other, i.e, market prices, equipment and supply costs

- Most agrarian people know how to work hard, but less about managing behavior and relationships—it's not in agricultural curricula (Rossman 2019)



Risk Factors

- **The Agrarian Imperative**

Like many animal species, humans have a basic need to acquire sufficient territory and the necessary resources (e.g., capital, equipment, buildings, livestock) to produce the food and shelter required by their families and communities. Also called “the agrarian imperative”, this genetically programmed instinct drives farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. **The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to tolerate unusual pain and adversity, to trust their own judgment, and to take uncommon risks.**

Rossman, MR (2010). The Agrarian Imperative Journal of Agromedicine 16 71-75

Risk Factors

- Work/life balance
- Economics
- Language/culture of farming
- Exposure to pesticides/farm chemicals/grain dust
- Stigma
- Trauma history
- Lack of/reluctance to seek mental health services



Risk Factors

- Alcohol use as a coping strategy
- Access to lethal means
- Lack of Vitamin D
- High altitude
- Mental illness
- Anxiety and stress regarding climate change
- Social isolation

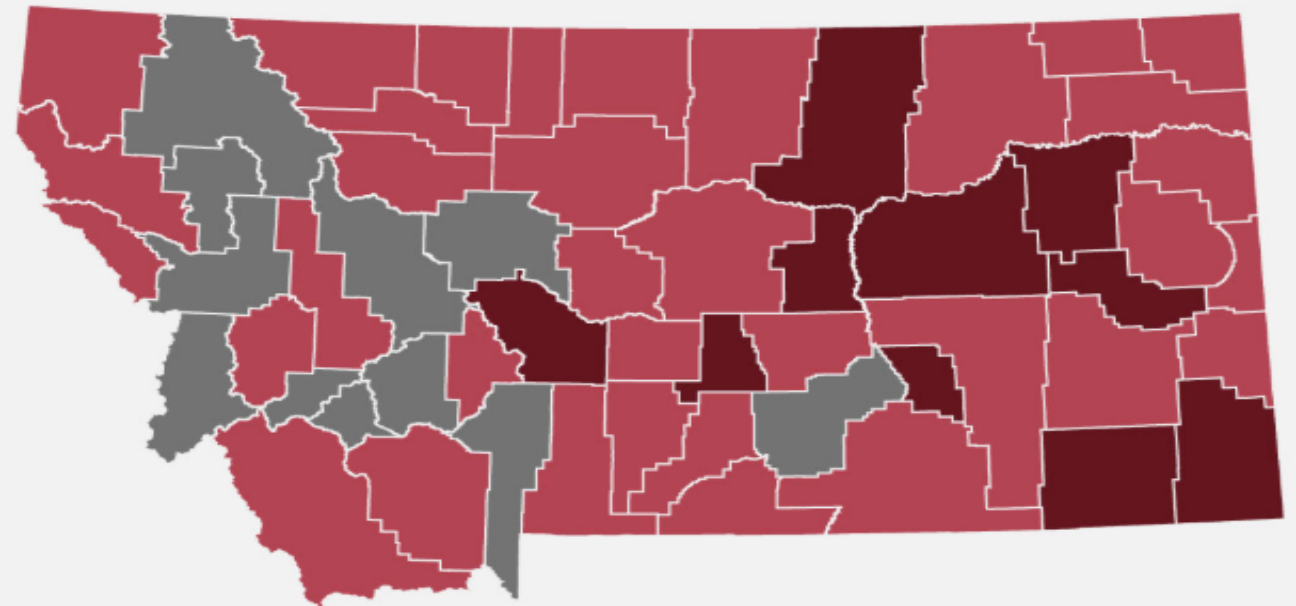


Isolation in Montana

What isolation looks like in Montana

The rate of suicides in rural America outpaces that in urban America. One explanation for this is social isolation. In Montana, it's easy to see how isolated a person can be. Of the state's 56 counties, 45 have a population of fewer than six people per square mile. And 10 of those have a population of fewer than one person per square mile.

- More than 6 people per square mile
- Fewer than 6 people per square mile
- Fewer than 1 person per square mile



Source: US Census Bureau
Graphic: Curt Merrill, CNN

Myths about Suicide

- Most suicides happen without warning
- People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out
- Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal
- Talking about it causes it
- Strong people don't kill themselves

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Learn warning signs**

- Up to 80% will display warning signs often missed

- **Words**

- The Big 3:
 - Burden
 - Loss of hope
 - Don't see a future for themselves

- **Mood**

- Depressed
- Sudden improvement

- **Actions**

- Acquiring access to lethal means
- Anger; expression of anger
- Withdrawal

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Ask in Earnest**
 - **SEE** from the 30,000 foot view
 - **LISTEN** a little differently
 - **ASK** the hard questions
 - Strong & vulnerable are not opposites
 - Direct
 - *How* you ask can make a difference
 - Plans/details

Action Steps to Save Lives

- Restrict access to lethal means
 - Put **TIME** and **DISTANCE** between suicidal thoughts and actions
- In Montana, 2/3 of suicides involve the use of a gun
 - In the U.S., about ½ of suicides involve the use of a gun
 - This is NOT about gun control, this is about saving lives
- Share your concerns
 - Too serious to take on by yourself
- Visit to their primary care provider

Action Steps to Save Lives

- Take action:
 - **CALL** 1-800-273-TALK or 911
 - **Beginning July 2022**, launching of national **988** for mental health emergencies
 - **TEXT** “Go” or “Start” or “Help” to 741741
 - **GO** to your local emergency room
 - **HELP** them connect
 - **FOLLOW UP & ADVOCATE!!!!!!**

Action Steps to Save Lives

- Gatekeeper training i.e,
Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
QPR is like CPR for suicide
QPR for Farmers is now available
- County health department
- County extension office
- Who in your community can champion these efforts?



Action Steps to Save Lives



Action Steps to Save Lives

TUGS Talking, Understanding, Growing, Supporting

Farmer Angel Network

TUGS

Talking, Understanding, Growing, Supporting



WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO WHY WE'RE HERE WHERE TO TURN WHEN WE MEET HOW TO HELP

Even big ships need a little help sometimes.

Get Help Now

Donate to TUGS

✉ tugsgroup@gmail.com



Farmer Angel Network

November 24 at 7:43 AM · 🌐



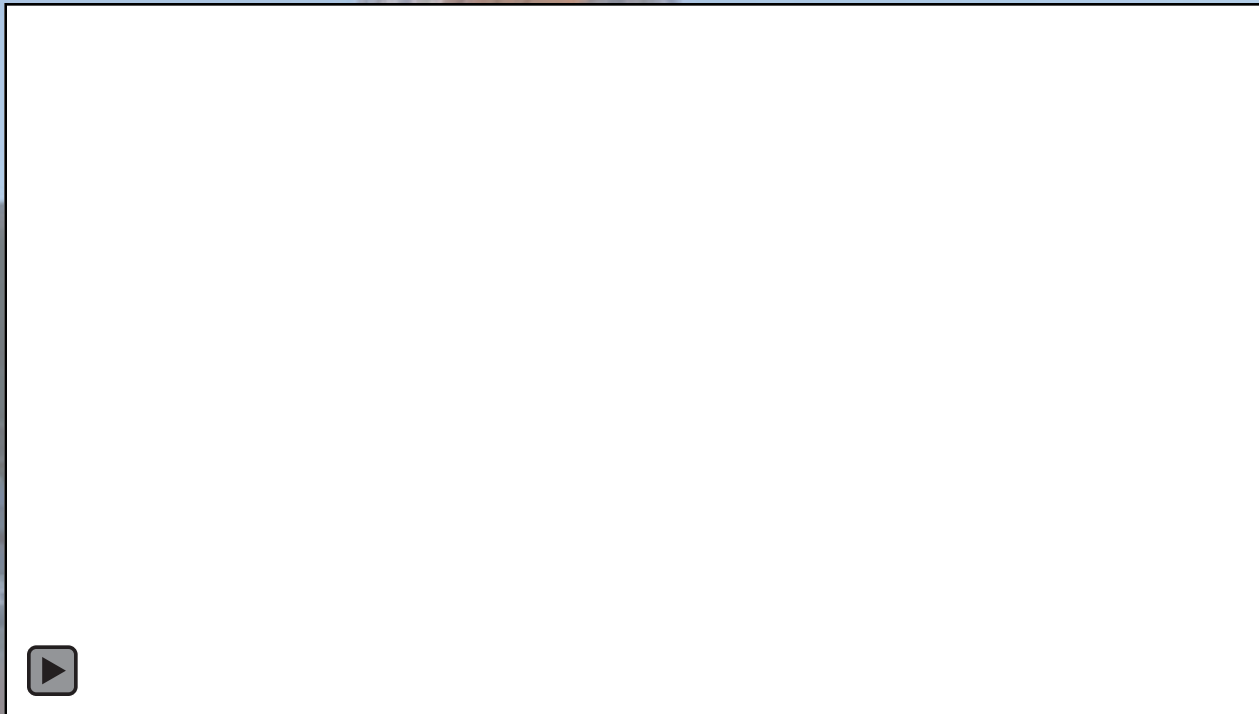
WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON



Cultivating Your Farm's Financial Future

This program provides information and a framework to help you make plans about your farm's future while also giving you tools to reduce stress.

Action Steps to Save Lives



Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Self care**
 - Why spend time talking about these things???
 - All of these can help combat **depression**
- **Sleep**
 - Sleep environment
- **Nutrition**
 - Nourish and hydrate your body the same as your crops and livestock
- **Exercise**
 - Aerobic (i.e. walking, cycling, running, dancing)
 - 20-30 minutes most days of the week (accumulate 60 even better)
 - Exercise positively impacts brain chemistry
- **Stress Management**



Action Steps to Save Lives

- Resources

- [Farmer Angel Network](#) Facebook Page
- [TUGS](#) Talking, Understanding, Growing, Supporting
- American Farm Bureau [State of Mind](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Farm Aid Call Center](#) 1-800-FARM-AID (6:00 AM-7:00 PM Western time)
- [National Centre for Farmer Health](#)—Australia
- [MT State University](#) Ag Producer Stress Assistance Clearinghouse
- [Suicide Prevention Coalition of Yellowstone Valley](#)
- [Ask in Earnest](#)

Assisting Those Left Behind



- Understand the uniqueness of suicide grief
- Ask how you can help
 - Livestock
 - Field work
 - Chores/Projects
 - Volunteer/Organize/Delegate help w/ others
- Telling the story is part of the healing
- Realize the intensity of the grief
- Say their loved one's name, share stories
- Loved ones left behind are at more risk, check in on them
- Realize unique potential triggers—rural area

Sources

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- [America's farmers face multiplying pressures](#). Retrieved November 21, 2021. The Economist



Questions & Comments

- *Ask in Earnest*, and you may save a life
- www.askinearnest.org
- askinearnest@hotmail.com
- Darla Tyler-McSherry, Founder and Visionary
- Thank You

