

Ask in Earnest



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

National AgrAbility Conference
Spokane, Washington
March 21, 2023

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Candid and Compassionate Conversations

The background of the slide features a utility pole in the foreground, with several other poles visible in the distance. The scene is set in a flat, open field under a clear blue sky, with a range of mountains visible on the horizon.

- I. What We Know about Farming and Suicide
 - My story
- II. Risk Factors
- III. Suicide Myths
- IV. Action Steps to Save Lives
- V. 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)
- Age Matters
- Wasn't it worse in the 1980's?
- Every 60 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

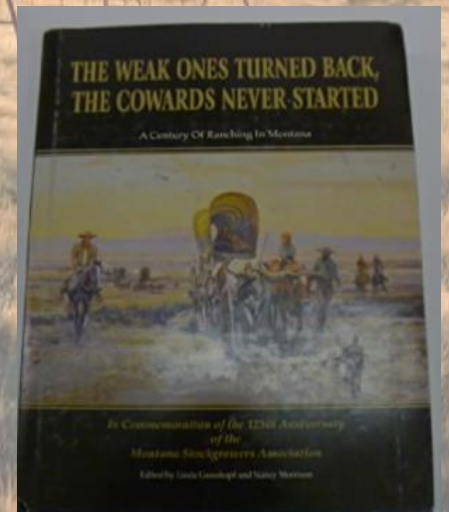
- **The Agrarian Imperative**

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

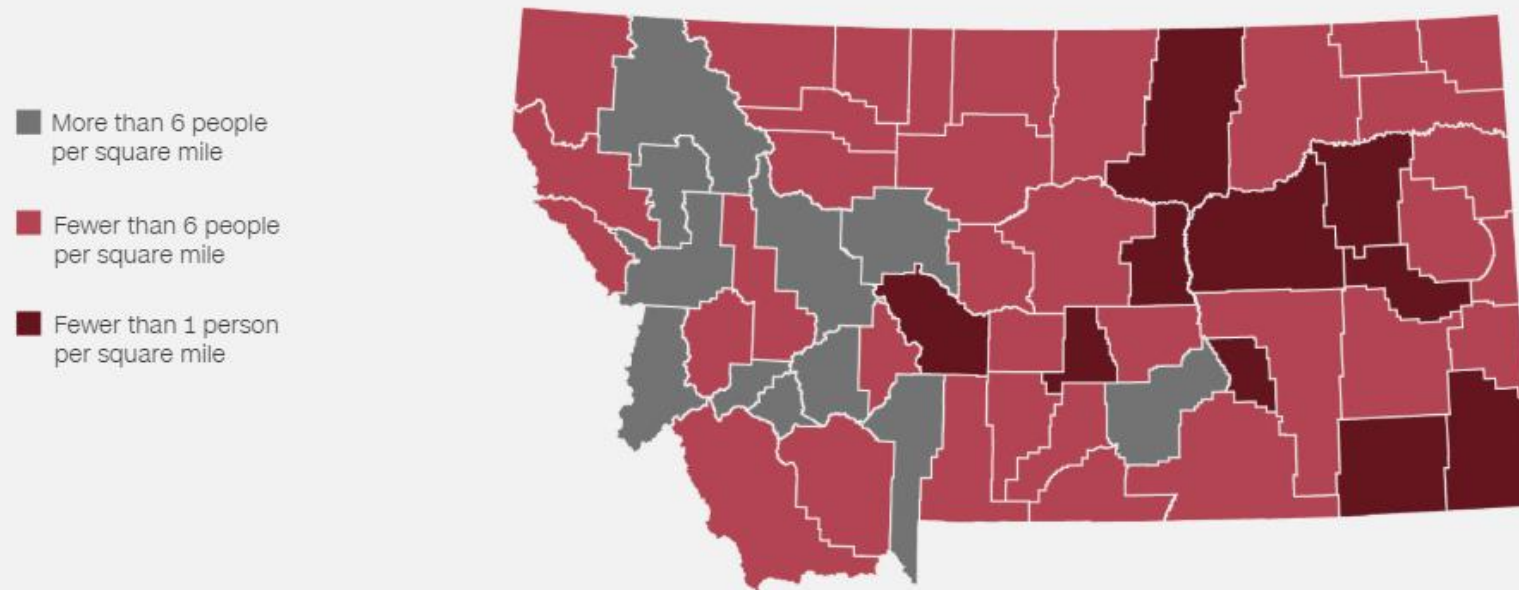
- Work/life balance
- Economics
- Language/culture of farming
- Access to lethal means
- Mental health conditions
- Stigma
- Social isolation



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.



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**
- Visit to their primary care provider
 - **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

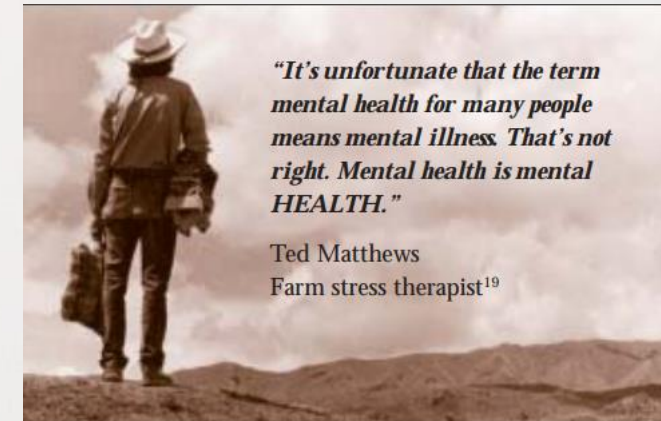
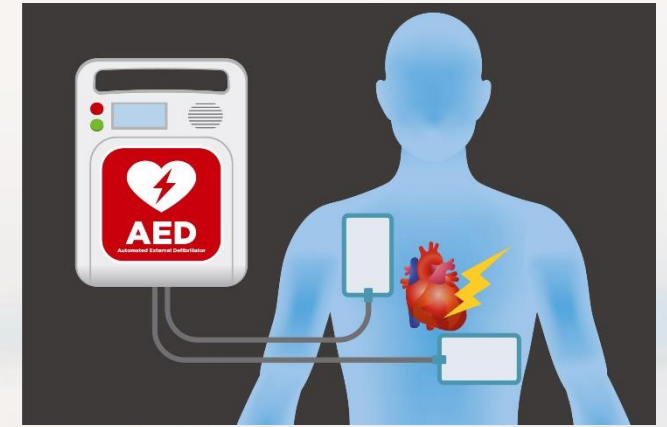
- Restrict access to lethal means
 - Put **TIME** and **DISTANCE** between suicidal thoughts and actions
- In Montana, nearly 2/3 of suicides involve a firearm
 - This is NOT about gun control, this is about saving lives
- Share your concerns
 - Too serious to take on by yourself

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **CALL** 988
- **TEXT** “Go” or “Start” or “Help” to 988
- **Chat** online www.988lifeline.org
- **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
- It's normal to get trained in CPR
- Let's make it normal to get trained in QPR
- No one says, "I can't do CPR because I'm not a doctor."
- Access these trainings:
 - County health department
 - County extension office
 - Who in your community can champion these efforts?

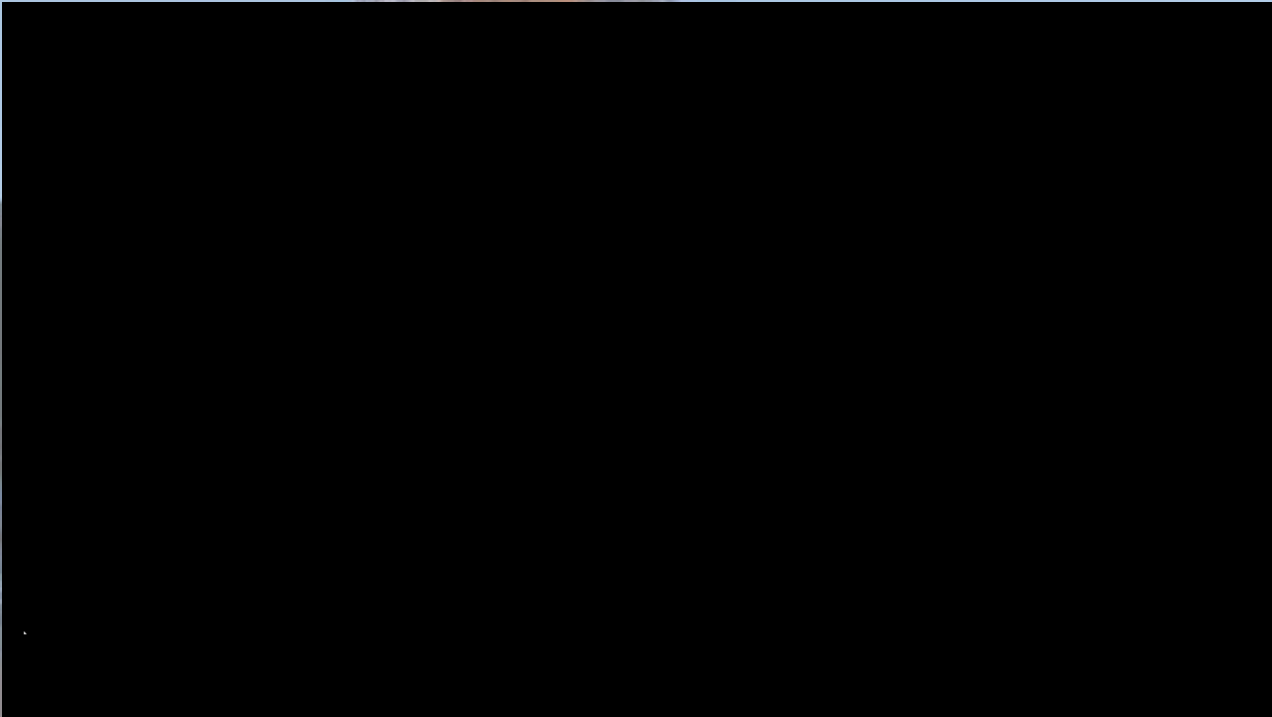


Action Steps to Save Lives



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

Action Steps to Save Lives



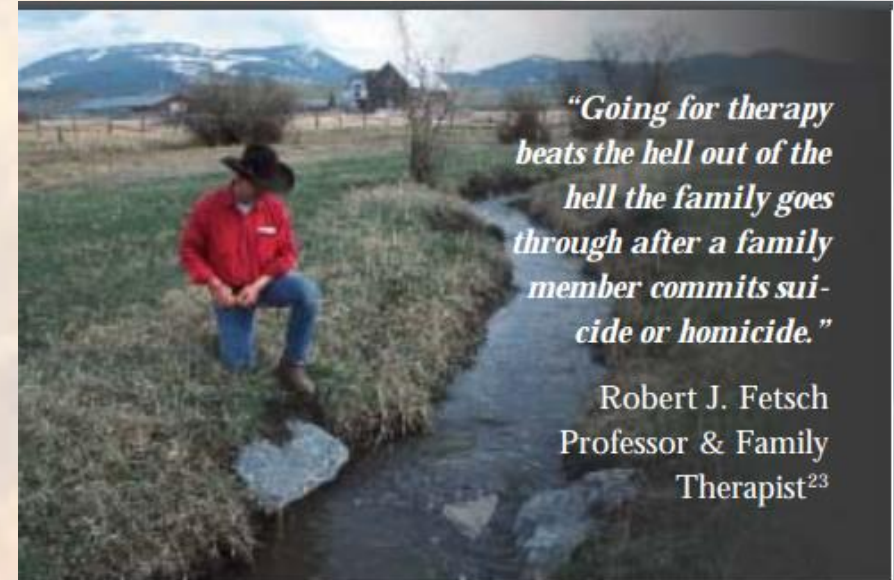
Action Steps to Save Lives EVERYONE Can Help!



Action Steps to Save Lives

A Team Approach

- The people on your checklist
- Healthcare provider
- Mental health provider
- Clergy
- Other supports, i.e., vet, banker, pharmacist
- Listen and learn from others podcasts, books



"It's Okay To Cry On The Farm"

Listen to this episode from Cutting Fences Podcast on Spotify. On this episode I interview...

Action Steps to Save Lives-- Farmers Take Care of One Another

Tap into who we are

- **“It’s in our nature to care. We are caretakers of the land, animals, and the community. If someone is experiencing a mental health condition, of course we should want to help.”**
- **“Because that’s in our nature.”**
- **“That’s who we are.”**

I am here for you!



Action Steps to Save Lives

Working Towards BALANCE

- Why talk about these things???
- All of these can help combat **depression**
 - Sleep
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Stress Management
 - Gratitude



Next Steps for Ask In Earnest

- Listen to farmers and ranchers and learn what is most valuable
- Bring mental health/suicide prevention trainings to the rural community—certified in QPR; QPR for Farmers is now available
- Elevate the conversations about mental health in the rural community



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](#)

Sources

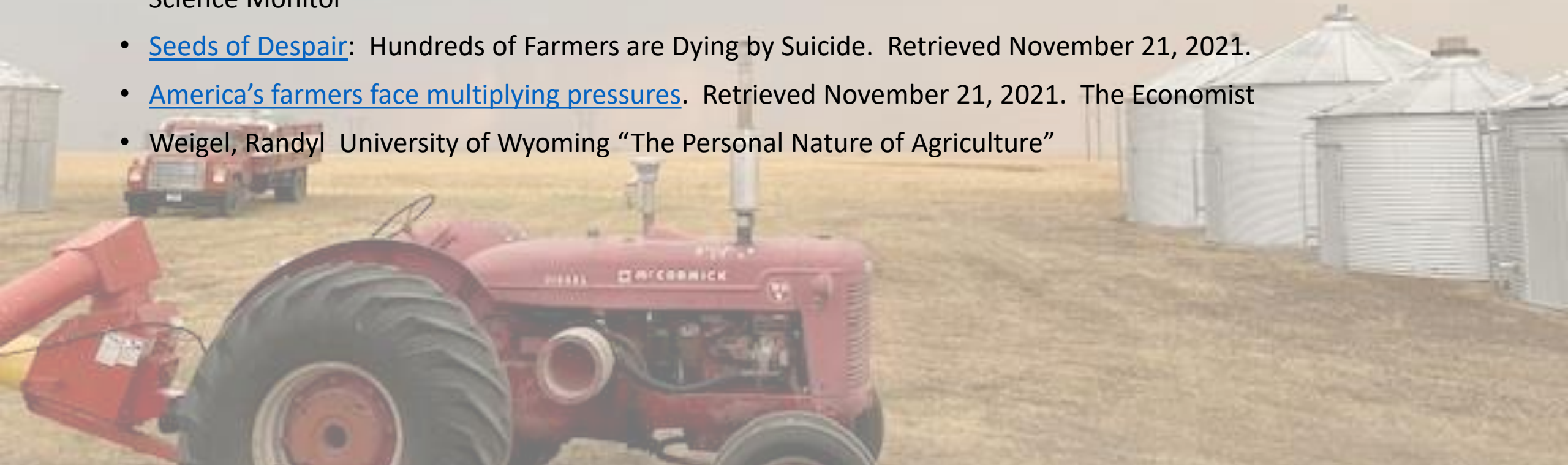
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Questions & Comments



- *Ask in Earnest*, and you may save a life
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- @AskInEarnest18 Twitter handle
- Facebook, LinkedIn
- *Thank You!*

