

SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES FOR FARMERS

Mental health is a severe concern for farmers, ranchers, their families, and employees. If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **988**. If texting is preferred, text HOME to **741741** for free crisis support 24 hours a day in the U.S.

When someone stops breathing and is suffering a cardiac arrest, their life may be saved by a bystander who is trained in CPR. Likewise, when someone is facing a potential suicide crisis, their life may be saved by a friend who is trained in "Question. Persuade. Refer" (QPR).

The "Question. Persuade. Refer." method is an emergency mental health intervention intended to identify and interrupt a suicide crisis and direct the affected person to the proper care.

CPR and QPR fill the gap between the moment of crisis and the arrival of professional care by following a prescribed series of steps.

Farmers and their allies can learn the QPR method of suicide prevention by attending a free online webinar. AgriSafe Network offers free 1.5-hour training. Check the link provided for dates. [QPR \(Question, Persuade, Refer\) - AgriSafe Network](#)

Upon completion, attendees are designated as QPR-trained Gatekeepers, which means they can recognize the warning signs of suicide, offer hope, and get professional help for the person in need. You don't have to be a nurse. All of us have a role in helping producers. Research has shown that laypeople can encourage others to get treatment.

This training goes beyond typical QPR training to include information specific to farmers. Knowing the stressors associated with farm life and culture should inform how you Question, Persuade and Refer anyone you may speak with about their mental health or suicidal ideations.

The rate of suicide and self-harm among farmers is near twice that of the general population. Contributing factors include long hours, physically demanding work, unpredictable income, factors out of the farmer's control, isolation, pressure to keep the farm in the family, and an identity closely tied to being a farmer.

Losing the farm or the threat of not being able to pass it on to future generations can equal the epitome of failure for the farmer. It's like they are losing themselves.

Because of the stigma some associate with mental health and the lack of local mental healthcare, many farmers resist seeking help. That makes it even more important for family members and friends of farmers to be aware of symptoms that could point to a potential suicide crisis.

Rugged individualism prevents help seeking-behavior. Farmers may think that since their father or grandfather made it through hard times, they should also be able to. She says guns are often needed on the farm and are very easily accessible, which increases the lethal risk for self-harm or suicide.

The alarming rates of stress and depression in the industry can also increase the farmer's risk of injury and the likelihood of diseases such as cancer and diabetes. The first signs may be physical complaints like headaches and abdominal pain.

Other signs that something's wrong may include drinking more than usual and letting things go on the farm. If a farmer's shop is generally tidy, and you notice tools lying everywhere, they could be dealing with depression—step in when you feel like you need to.

Don't leave the farm if you think something's happening with a farmer that could be detrimental. It's difficult to ask if they're considering suicide, but you ask. Asking that question is the hardest part. You may not know the perfect words to say. You don't have to fill the space with words. Just ask open-ended questions and give them time to talk.

Your willingness to listen and to help can rekindle hope and make all the difference. Seek professional help. Since QPR is used until professional help can be obtained, you are asked to store all the needed contact information in your phone, including suicide hotlines, local hospitals, and mental health professionals. This is something everyone can do. You may need to dial the phone for them. Offer to ride along and wait in the parking lot while they go in and talk to someone.

People who are having suicidal thoughts feel a disconnect from their community. QPR tries to reconnect them with people who care. We need to look at suicide as a preventable death.

SOURCES: Successful Farming and www.AgriSafe.org Network