

Avian Influenza & Farmers' Mental Health

About Avian Influenza

Avian influenza (Bird Flu) is a disease caused by a group of viruses that are particularly effective at spreading among birds. Bird flu is spread through contact with fecal droppings, saliva, and nasal discharges of infected birds. A farm with detected bird flu must quickly and humanely depopulate the affected flock. The farm is then thoroughly disinfected to kill all traces of the virus.



Impact on Farmers

Caring for animals and being faced with a depopulation situation can create stress for producers and workers. Stress happens to all of us and it is normal to feel overwhelmed, especially during tough times. If you feel anxious or depressed, *you are not alone*. Beyond your friends and family, there are many resources to help.

Know the Signs of Stress and Depression

- Persistent worry and fear
- Apprehension and uneasiness
- Avoiding others
- Feeling sad
- Lack of interest or pleasure in activities
- Significant weight change or changes in appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Slow or fidgety body movements
- Low energy/fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide
- Substance misuse
- Unexplained changes in physical appearance or behavior
- Headaches
- Feelings of isolation
- Anger
- Feeling numb

Being prepared with information on the personal safety and health of you and your workers will help relieve stress.

Use your smart phone to scan the QR code, or [click here](#) to review PPE guidelines for Bird Flu.



Know When to Seek Help

If you or someone you know shows signs of stress over the past 2 weeks, seek help from a mental health professional or one of the resources on the backside of this sheet.

Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline right away if you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill themselves or someone else, or talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide.

Take Care of Yourself & Your Workers

Caring for your physical health can help lower your stress level.

- Eat healthy foods
- Drink lots of water
- Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol
- Avoid tobacco or illegal drugs
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Get physical exercise

Use simple techniques for relaxation.

- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
- Engage in your favorite hobbies
- Pace yourself between stressful activities
- Find a work/life balance and do something you enjoy between stressful tasks
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends

Check in often to make sure everyone is doing well. The Animal Depopulation Resiliency Check-in Tool can be a helpful resource to guide conversations.

Use your smart phone to scan the QR code, or [click here](#) to review tool.



QPR for Farmers & Farm Families

The Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training teaches laypeople and professionals to recognize and respond to mental health crises. QPR for Farmers and Farm Families is specially tailored to the agricultural community. QPR trainings are available free to all through the AgriSafe Network and the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Sign up for free virtual QPR training at
<https://www.agrisafe.org/courses/qpr/>



Resources

Stress & Wellness

Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988, Press 1 or text to 838255

SAMHSA National Hotline

800-662-HELP (4357)

Suicide

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Dial 988

National Suicide Prevention Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741

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