

Health-related quality of life and associated stressors in farming

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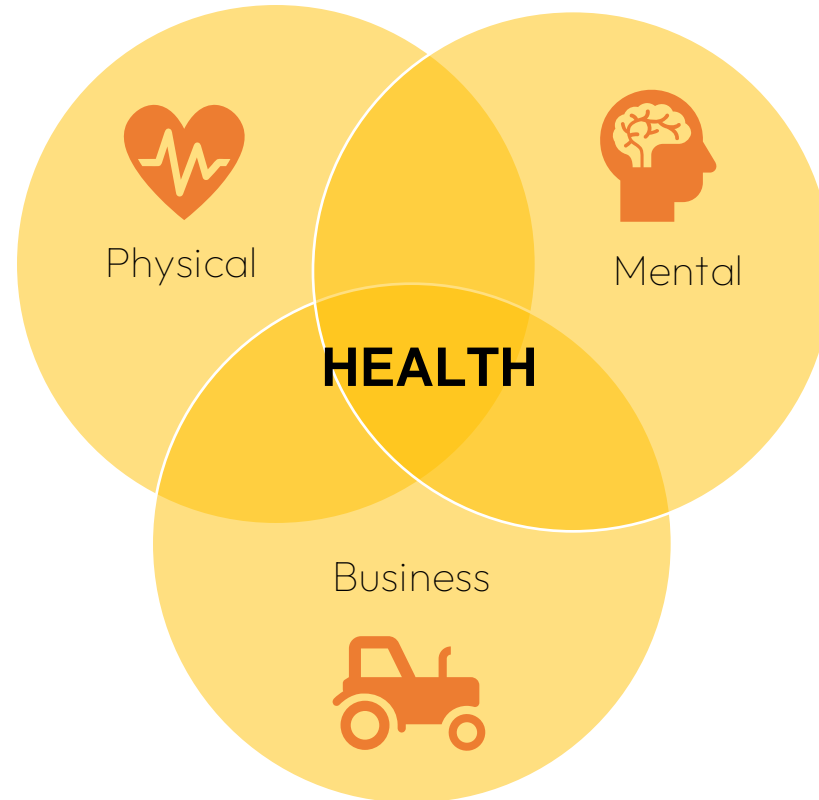
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Health, Well-being, Quality of Life and Quality Dairying



CRPR research on farm health & wellbeing



University
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- Agricultural health and well-being (RABI's Big Farming Survey, 2021)
- Loneliness & Social Isolation in farming communities (with FCN, 2021). *Funded by the Loneliness & Social Isolation in Mental Health Research Network, which is funded by UKRI.*
- Empowering 'accidental counsellors' (2023)
- More than a mart: The role of livestock auction markets in rural communities (2021)
- SW Farm survey (2006-2020)
- Covid-19, Christian faith and wellbeing (2020)
- Rural stress review (2005)

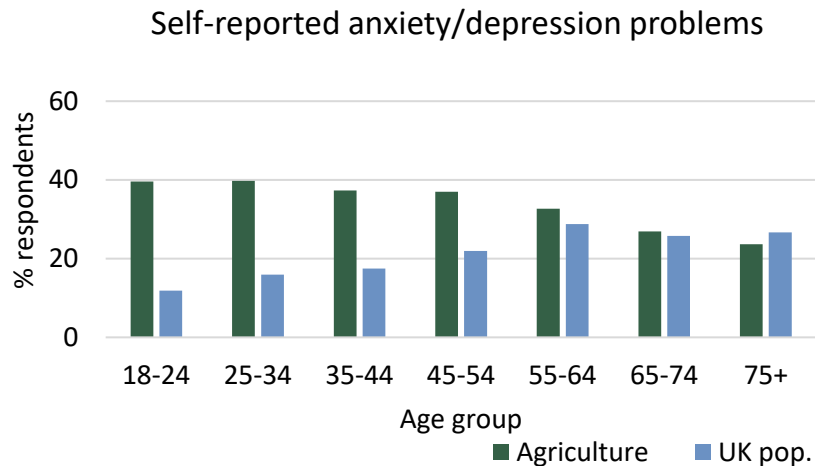
<https://sociology.exeter.ac.uk/research/crpr/research/publications/researchreports/>

RABI 
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helping farming people

FCN | **THE FARMING
COMMUNITY
NETWORK**



Mental health



	Possible/probable depression (%)	Moderate/severe anxiety (%)
Cereals	30	13
General cropping	30	15
Horticulture	33	16
Specialist Pigs	47	27
Specialist Poultry	35	17
Dairy	39	21
LFA Grazing Livestock	39	20
Lowland Grazing Livestock	38	18
Mixed	35	19
Other	30	15
All farms	36	18

- 34% dairy respondents (31% all farms) self-reported problems with moderate or severe anxiety/depression
- Younger more likely than older to report problems with anxiety/depression
- More than one farmer a week takes their own life (ONS, 2019)

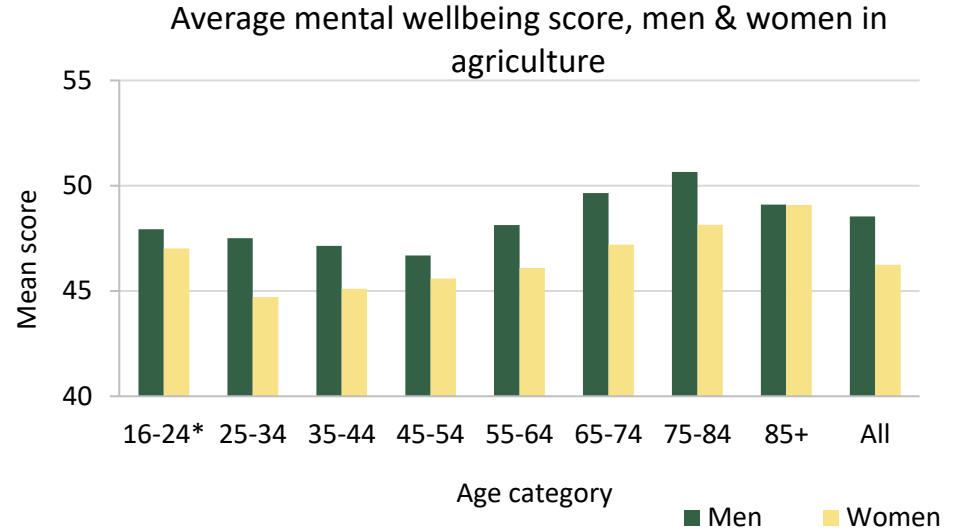
Farming women

*“Farmers are a breed that, they’re so very stubborn buggers aren’t they? I mean **even now it’s a man’s world**, you have got to be one damn good woman to be accepted”*

(Farming woman, age 60-69)

*“The farm just sucks the men... **There is a lot of lonely women out there with little kids.**”*

(Farming woman, aged 60-69)

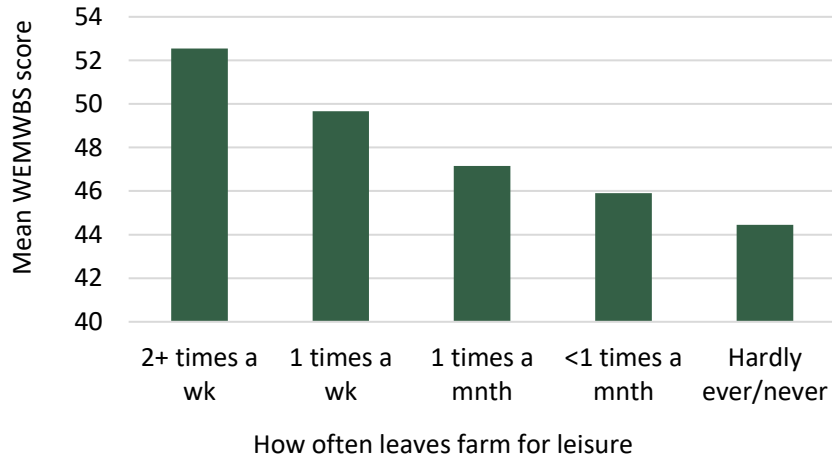


Women aged 25-44:

- Low mental wellbeing
- High anxiety
- Low self-rated health
- More likely than men to feel lonely & not meet socially at least once a week

Taking time away from the farm

Average mental wellbeing score & leaving the farm for leisure purposes

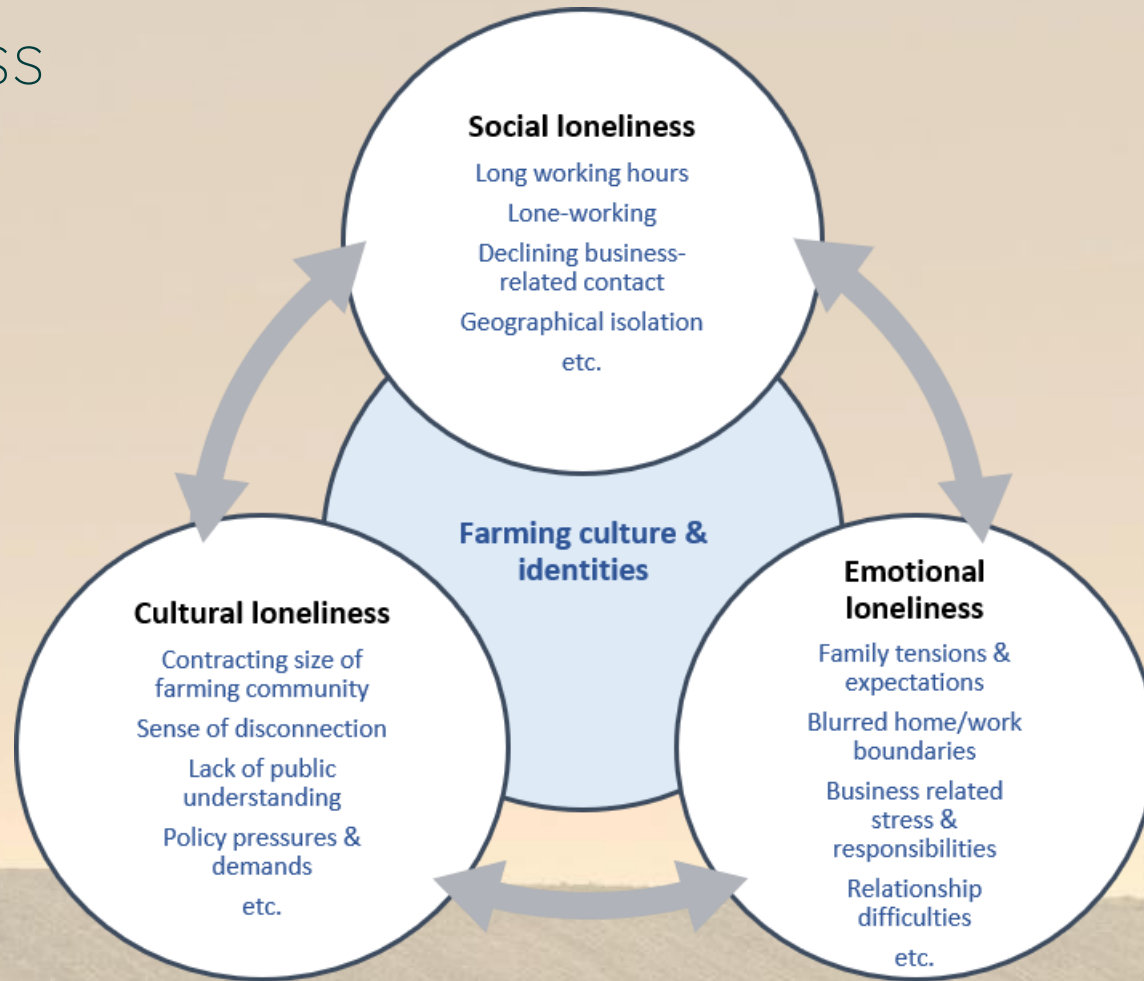


- 44% dairy respondents (45% all) do not take a holiday every year and 18% (20% all) **never** take a holiday
- 30% dairy respondents (29% all) hardly ever or never leave the farm for leisure purposes.
- 44% dairy farmers do not meet socially at least once a week (compared to 51% of all farms)

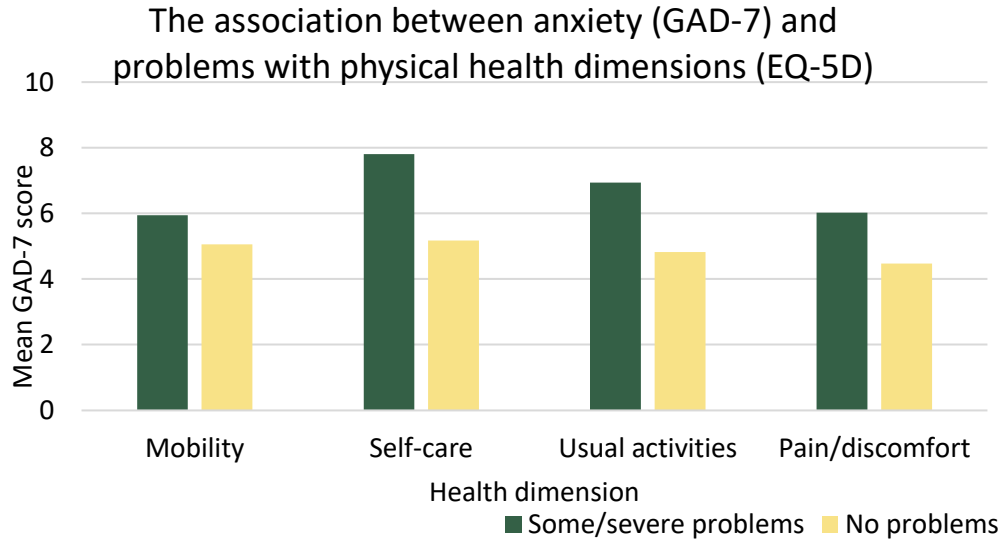
“And then you have got the likes of my husband’s family. If you have an hour off, it is a sin. Farmers are a rare breed, they’ll farm to their death”.

(Farming woman, age 60-69)

Loneliness



Connecting physical and mental health



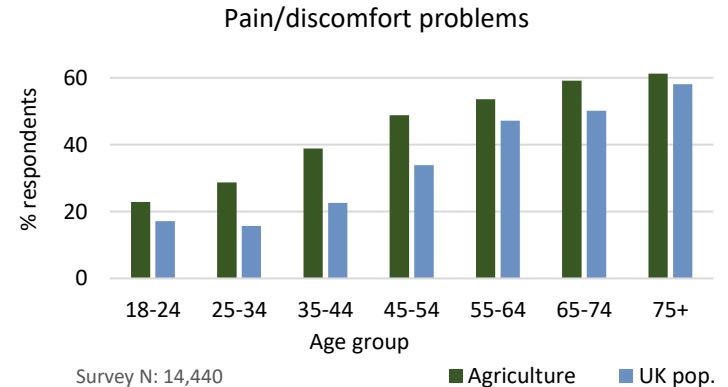
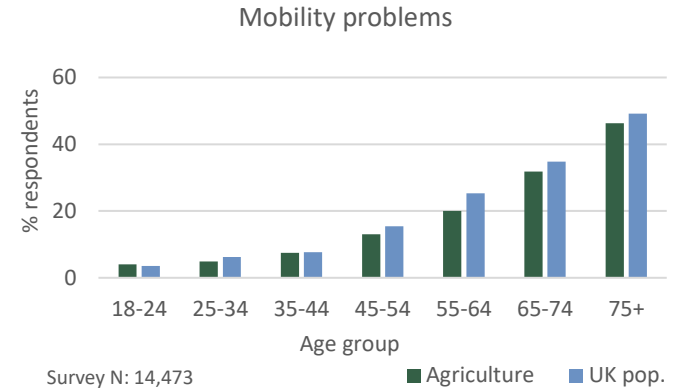
“And then you get really bad lower back from all the tractor driving... So you get into a rut with your depression and your body aches and you don’t sleep properly and you get this whirlpool effect”
(Farming man, age 40-49)

“We’ve been constantly working and I can’t see me having a day off before at least the end of July. And I’ve got tennis elbow now from working all the time”
(Farming man, age 30-39)



Physical health

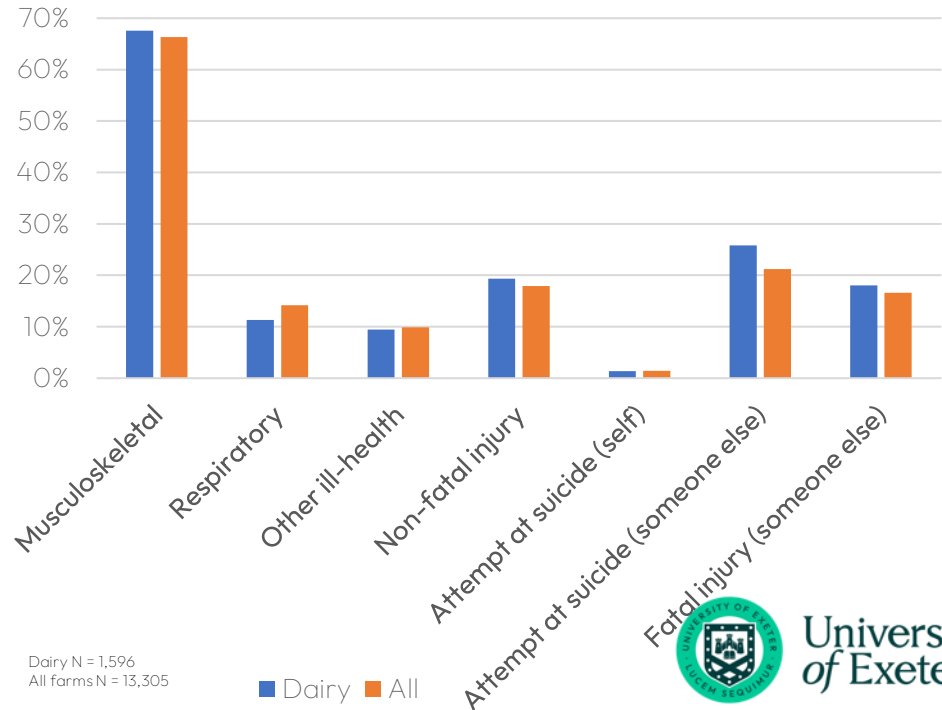
- 24% dairy respondents (24% all) problems with mobility
- 54% dairy respondents (52% all) problems with pain/discomfort



On-farm health & safety

- 66% dairy respondents (64% all) said that they had experienced farm-related 'pain in muscles/joints etc.'
- 19% (16% all) had sustained a non-fatal injury, in the past 5 year
- The average rate of fatal injuries in agriculture over the last five years is around 21 times as high as the all-industry rate (HSE, 2023)

Experience of farm-related ill-health in last 5 years



Connecting personal health and 'business' health

Of those with moderate/severe anxiety (GAD):

- 24% said stress had negatively impacted the quality of farm work
- 22% said stress had negatively affected their concentration/attention to farm safety
- 15% said that ill-health had affected the ongoing viability of the farm

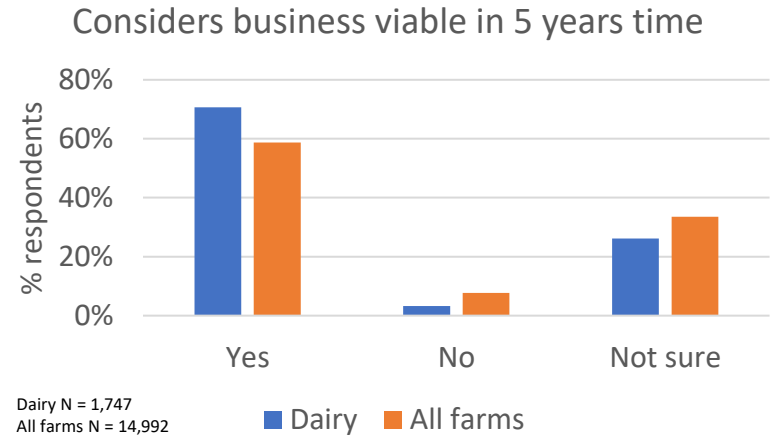
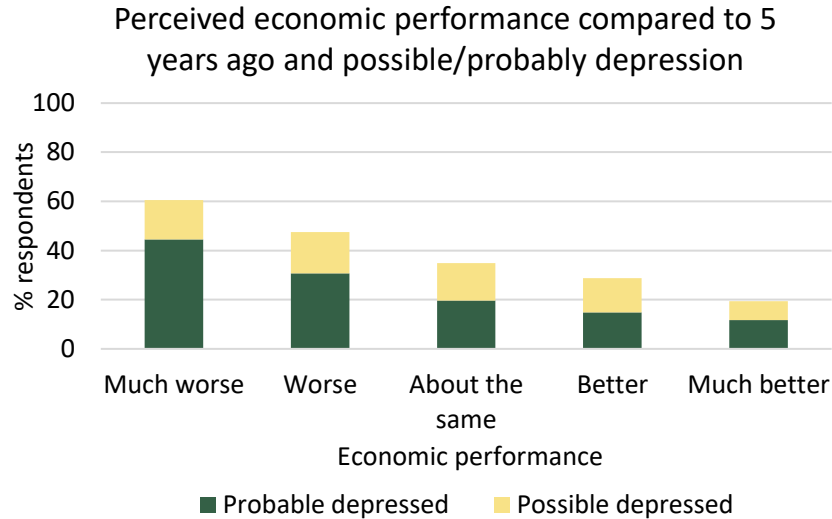


Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

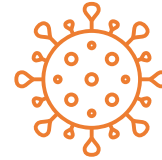
"We could see things happening which didn't add up to us, and that was with cattle, and we just couldn't work out what was going on. He wouldn't talk about it. Then eventually it came out that he had got into a real muddle with paperwork and BPS and it had all got completely on top of him, and he'd split up with his wife"

(Farming man, age 60-69)

Business 'health' and viability



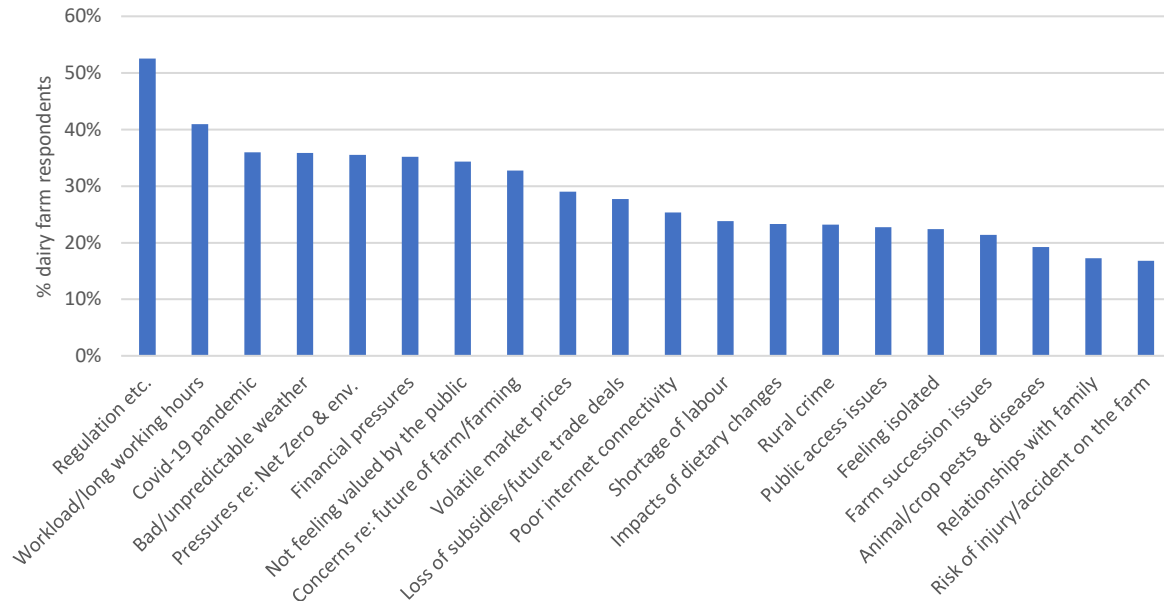
Stress factors



Top 3 stress factors for dairy farm respondents:

- Regulation, compliance and inspection
- Workload pressures/long working hours
- The Covid-19 pandemic & Bad/unpredictable weather

Factors causing dairy farm respondents stress 'quite a lot' or 'to a large extent'



Barriers to help-seeking

- Stoicism and stigma
- Not wanting to burden others
- Reluctance to visit G.P
- Lack of time
- Support needs to be farming specific

*"We don't talk enough. People are too embarrassed and too ashamed of what's going on in the real world and they don't open up.... **A farmer is very proud and very good at hiding stuff.***

(Farming man, age 40-49)



Improving quality of life in agriculture

- Wider farming community and industry
- Government
- Public engagement
- Formal support
- Informal support



University
of Exeter

Empowering 'accidental counsellors' to support the health & well-being of farmers

New online resource hub and LinkedIn group -
due to launch very soon!

<https://www.accidentalcounsellors.co.uk/>

*"It's like, what should you do?
Like you then go home
worrying yourself. Someone's
confided in you, you can't
direct them anywhere for
support because there isn't,
you're not really sure where
to direct them at all"*

(Farm vet)

Accidental Counsellors Hub

Resources About Contact

ACCIDENTAL COUNSELLORS University of Exeter

Are you looking for help to support a farmer?

Perhaps you are an accountant, land agent, vet or feed supplier and you find yourself providing more than just professional expertise. Or you might be a farmer, supporting a fellow farmer. You're not alone. Welcome to the Accidental Counsellor Hub, your go-to resource for when you step into the role of an Accidental Counsellor.

View resources

Thank you.



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Relevant papers:

Wheeler, R. and Lobley, M. (2023) Anxiety and associated stressors among farm women in England and Wales. *Journal of Agromedicine* <https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2023.2200421>

Wheeler, R. and Lobley, M. (2022). Health-related quality of life within agriculture in England and Wales: results from a EQ-5D-3L self-report questionnaire. *BMC Public Health* <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13790-w>

Wheeler, R., Lobley, M., McCann, J. and Phillimore, A. (2022). 'It's a lonely old world': Developing a multidimensional understanding of loneliness in farming. *Sociologia Ruralis* <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12399>

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (14 item version)

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been interested in other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've had energy to spare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been dealing with problems well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been thinking clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling good about myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling close to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling loved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been interested in new things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been feeling cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7)

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not being able to stop or control worrying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worrying too much about different things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trouble relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Eq-5D-3L and EQ-VAS

Under each heading, please tick **ONE** box that best describes your health **TODAY**

MOBILITY	
I have no problems in walking about	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have some problems in walking about	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confined to bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
SELF-CARE	
I have no problems with self-care	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have some problems washing or dressing myself	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unable to wash or dress myself	<input type="checkbox"/>
USUAL ACTIVITIES (e.g. work, study, housework, family or leisure activities)	
I have no problems with performing my usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have some problems with performing my usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unable to perform my usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
PAIN / DISCOMFORT	
I have no pain or discomfort	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have moderate pain or discomfort	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have extreme pain or discomfort	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANXIETY / DEPRESSION	
I am not anxious or depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am moderately anxious or depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am extremely anxious or depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>

We would like to know how good or bad your health is **TODAY**.

- This scale is numbered from 0 to 100.
- 100 means the best health you can imagine.
- 0 means the worst health you can imagine.
- Please mark an X on the scale to indicate how your health is **TODAY**.
- Now, write the number you marked on the scale in the box below

YOUR HEALTH =
TODAY

