

Identifying, managing and minimising stress

Stress can lead to mental health problems, likewise mental health problems can cause stress therefore it is best to deal with the pressures that are causing the stress to try and minimise their effect on the body and mind.

Stress is not always a bad thing, it is important to acknowledge that stress can be productive and performance enhancing. It will help if you are able to spot the signs of stress to gain better control of coping with your feelings, minimising the any negative effects that can stress can have on your personal health.

Cognitive symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor Judgement
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying



Behavioural Symptoms:

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits – nail biting, pacing etc.

Spotting the signs of stress



Emotional Symptoms:

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness or isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

Physical Symptoms:

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds

Triggers

In most circumstances the triggers of stress are out of your control however it is important to understand stress is not always there as a negative feeling, instead it is good to understand the practical ways you can try and relieve the pressures that are causing the stress and build from that in your emotional intelligence through growing your resilience.

Understand why you are stressed



Identify the stressor



Manage the stressor

Managing stress and building resilience

- Get to know your own “stress capacity”.
- Identify what your stressors are and avoid them if at all possible.
 - If unavoidable plan these activities and spread them out.
 - If they all come at once, ask for help.
 - Share stressful responsibilities with others.
- Talk with others – it’s not a sign of weakness.

Building your personal resilience can be a great way to start controlling and preventing stress. Building resilience can both reduce stress and also minimise the impact that stress can have on your mental wellbeing. The below chart develops these simple pointers that will help to manage difficult times, manage mental illness and reduce levels of stress, helping in the process to bounce back from periods of hard times. Further information on building resilience can be found on the FarmWell website.



Exercise: exercise is essential in developing mental and physical resilience, there are plenty of accessible resources developed to stay fit at home and work alongside a busy farming life ([FarmWell staying physically fit](#)).

Make a list: making a list of jobs by level of importance can help you focus your time and energy onto prioritising those things that are more urgent. If you are struggling to cope or tasks are becoming overwhelming, talking to a colleague, friend or family member may aid you in pushing back tasks until you are feeling less stressed.

Try mindfulness
([FarmWell mindfulness](#))



Managing stress and mental illness



Talk to someone: you do not have to go through things alone if you are overwhelmed or under pressure. Talk to friends, and family members about the pressures you are facing. There are a host of online farming forums to help share similar problems with people in similar situations who may share their solutions to resolve the issue ([FarmWell farming forums](#)). If you would like to speak to one of the FCN volunteers, call the helpline on: 03000 111999

Look after yourself: Stress can have a physical toll, it's important that you eat a healthy diet, take part in physical exercise and ensure you have sufficient time to sleep. Making time to take care of yourself will help you stay strong in the face of stress.

Take a break: it is important to have down time in a busy working day to allow you to physically and mentally recover, positive distractions during breaks can actually improve productivity. These can include taking time for [mindfulness](#), head over to the [Fit for Farming booklet](#) on FarmWell to help build your personal care on the farm. A short time away can help you come back with a fresh perspective.

