

Sadly, increasingly we are aware of the challenging issues surrounding dementia, often the sufferer is not willing to accept a diagnoses, and can refuse to hand over running the business, causing stress throughout the family and financial pressures.

In short because farming is stressful enough with outside issues such as; Brexit, finance, government regulations etc. it can take very little to tip the balance into major fallouts within families.

It can be very difficult to attempt to help to sort out family issues that have become entrenched over years or following many bitter confrontations.

FCN can help by being a confidential listening ear to the whole family, to try and help them get a better perspective on their issues.

Practical suggestions that may help could include;

- ▶ To suggest formal board type family meetings with minutes taken and voting for any business changes.
- ▶ To seek outside business or financial support.
- ▶ To sit round the kitchen table with “the wooden spoon” i.e. the only person who can speak is the one holding “the spoon” so each person is given time to be listened to.
- ▶ To encourage “time out” away from the farm can often help see things in a better perspective.
- ▶ To support the family to plan ahead for the future of the business.
- ▶ It’s important to give each member of the family “a safe space” to talk maybe with different FCN volunteers.
- ▶ Signpost to other relevant charities; RABI, Addington, Forage Aid, Samaritans, Dementia Support and any relevant local charities.
- ▶ Above all to be aware of any potential mental health issues.

At FCN we are here to “walk the walk” with families, we can’t always solve everything – but we can often make the situation feel a bit better, and to realise that sometimes families have to “agree to disagree” in a positive way, so that they can move forward in a more constructive way.

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PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Graham Redman, Author of the John Nix Farm Management Pocket Book



Most adult swans are white. But not all. You can also get black swans. We don't see many of them, but they are more abundant than most people accept.

The term Black Swan is also used to refer to events that have a small chance of occurring on a particular date, but when they do happen, affect our lives, businesses and ways we think, and, in hindsight are more predictable than we had previously accepted. Examples on a global scale include Coronavirus, unexpected US presidents, Brexit, and going further back, global financial meltdown in 2007-8, the 9-11 disaster. We all have our own Black Swans too, and these are the events that affect us, our lives and our businesses but perhaps make almost no difference to anybody else. This could be serious illness, accidents, litigation.

The concept of the Black Swan was popularised in the remarkable book of the same name by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. Taleb claims the Coronavirus was not a Black Swan as it was totally predictable (he did in fact write about it in his 2007 book I have just mentioned) but for most of us, it was a Black Swan. At least, the way the world reacted to it will have been!

The UK food and farming industry on the whole has provided a remarkable service throughout the whole pandemic period, meeting the continued needs of the population, under the stresses of redirected supply chains with outlets closing, panic buying, changed consumer habits with home consumption, derailed export demands, and imports hampered by delays at ports and other key logistical points and of course many workers off work for various reasons.

Farms have greater resilience than most other businesses, with largely robust balance sheets, income from various streams, determination of family ownership, and lifestyles intertwined within them. The lack of a Plan B on most farms raises the resilience levels. This might sound odd but if there is no alternative to farming, the determination to keep farming increases. Owning a farm and it being lifestyle as well as job increases resilience further but lowers profits.