

It's Time to Break Down the Stigma

By Bridget Britton, Behavioral Health Field Specialist ANR

September is National Suicide Prevention Month, and with that comes the opportunity to raise awareness to help prevent even one more suicide from happening. When you live where you work the stress often never leaves a person's mind. Unfortunately, people become overwhelmed to a point where they feel there is no other option beside suicide. For that exact reason it is important to talk about suicide, and how can we support those going through a mental health challenge in effort to prevent a future suicide.

How is this affecting our community?

- The agricultural community is [1.5 times](#) more likely to die by suicide than any other population in the United States according to a CDC study published in 2017. Suicides are up by over 40% in the last 20 years according to this same study. Farmers and foresters experience unique stressors, whether related to health insurance, market prices, weather, or legal issues it all compounds impacting the mental and physical health of our ag community.
- Farmers have easier access to lethal means in the way of guns and medication that has not been prescribed to them. Allowing for suicide to be more obtainable.
- We all struggle to talk about suicide and mental health. Though the conversations are happening they are still quiet. The stigma or fear of admitting a person needs support is still very real. Bringing this conversation out to the light allows for more open discussion.

What can be done to help support?

- Many local communities will come together for rallies, walks, or speaking events this month. Check with your local [mental health and recovery board](#) to see what may be going on in your area. Seek out education on how to support others that may be walking through challenging times. Trainings are available to help spot warning signs and symptoms of potential mental health challenges or crises. These trainings do not make you a licensed professional, but they do provide tools to support family, friends, or strangers going through a difficult time and may help prevent suicide.
 - [Mental Health First Aid](#)
 - [QPR \(Question, Persuade, Refer\)](#)
 - [Trauma Informed Care](#)

All of these trainings are offered through OSU Extension. The next Mental Health First Aid will be offered virtually through Extension on October 1st. Contact Bridget Britton, britton.191@osu.edu, for more information or to register for any of these trainings. The farm stress team has developed a website with more information and resources on the topics of mental health and farm stress for our ag community at u.osu.edu/farmstress. Visit and subscribe today for the most up to date information!

Bridget Britton, Behavioral Health Field Specialist ANR, can be reached at 330-365-8160 or britton.191@osu.edu. This column is provided by the OSU Extension Agricultural Safety and Health Team. <https://agsafety.osu.edu/>.