



Communication Skills to Deal With Farm Stress

– Most families find communication to be interesting and difficult. Each of us is a unique individual with his or her own beliefs, feelings, needs and agendas. It's not always easy to be heard or to get our unique needs and agendas met within the family setting.

Communication can be even more difficult in farm families. Why? For one thing, farm family members live and work side-by-side. There is no separation between work and family and the tensions of farming often spill over into the family arena. But there is another factor as well. Farming often involves intergenerational or multi-family arrangements and significant tensions can develop between father and son, between mother and daughter-in-law, or between the various families involved in a family corporation.

It helps if farm families understand a basic concept: interpersonal issues are a lot like weeds—they don't go away unless you root them out and, if left alone, they can choke out the crop. Farm families need to find ways of promoting self worth and preventing interpersonal conflict so interpersonal issues don't "choke out the crop." The following skills can be helpful in doing this.

Practice the art of active listening.

Active listening involves paraphrasing or restating the other person's ideas and feelings in the listener's own words. It's a way of drawing out the other person and checking on whether you really heard what the speaker was saying. The active listener avoids evaluating what the other person has said and refrains from blaming, interpreting, persuading or giving advice to the other person. You simply feed the message back in a caring way that encourages a response. The use of certain phrases lets the other person know that you are actively listening. These include: "I hear you saying ____." "It sounds like you ____." "You seem to be feeling ____."

Watch for early warning signals that conflict is just around the corner. External signals (in others) include sarcasm, teasing, nit-picking, criticism, yelling, avoidance, and the stony, silent glare. Internal signs (in yourself) include accelerated heart rate, faster and shallower breathing, increased muscle tension, butterflies in the stomach, and cold clammy hands. These external and internal signals indicate that there is tension occurring within a relationship. It's important to recognize these signals, pay attention to them, and take some action to head off future conflict. Remember that conflict can be good if it makes people aware that a problem exists and if it causes them to become involved in solving that problem.

Share something of yourself—disclose what you are thinking, feeling and wanting. One of the biggest problems in communication is not knowing what other persons are thinking,

feeling or wanting. Sharing our thoughts and feelings sometimes involves risk-risk that the other person won't listen or care; risk that your wants and needs will conflict with those of other persons. But it's the only way others can know what we want and need in our relationships. It's also helpful to share what you are willing to do to resolve a conflict. Use of the following statements can be helpful: "I sense that we're in conflict over this issue." "I'm concerned (or worried, anxious, afraid) about it." "What I'd really like is ____." "I'm willing to _ to resolve the issue."

When you feel angry, count to 10... or 50... or 1000 and then report this anger to the other person.

The two most common forms of dealing with anger—burying it and exploding at others—are not very effective. Burying it hurts the person who is angry and exploding at others hurts those other people. It's helpful to take a few moments (or a few hours) to cool off and reflect on the situation—to get in touch with what you are thinking, feeling and wanting. Then report this anger to the other person in ways that encourage a productive response. Use words that describe what the person did or what happened to make you angry. Here is an example of phrases that communicate anger without putting the other person on the defensive: "John, I was angry at you when _____. I don't like feeling that way. What can we do to resolve this issue?"

Use one-minute criticisms as a way of expressing interpersonal gripes in families. One-minute criticisms (delivered in a minute or less) can be an important problem-solving tool since they allow individuals to raise concerns and feelings without demeaning or demoralizing the other person. The following guidelines should be kept in mind when giving one-minute criticisms: a) focus on the other person's behavior (what's bugging you), b) do it soon (unless you're angry), c) express your true feelings (if angry or resentful, say so), d) stop for a moment of silence, e) emphasize that you value the other person, f) give support through touch, g) allow time for the other person to respond, and h) recognize that the criticism is over. Criticism can be an important problem-solving tool, but not when it's used to punish or demean the other person.

Use one-minute praises as a way of expressing support and caring in families. A supportive, caring family will be in a much better position to deal with conflict when it does arise. One-minute praises provide other people with positive feedback on something they've done. Thus, it's one of the best tools

Designing Modern Dairy Facilities Seminar

Designing Modern Dairy Facilities is a seminar focusing on some of the most current ideas and practices in dairy cow housing. No matter how many cows you have, facility design, cow comfort and animal welfare are important topics in the dairy industry today. This will be an opportunity to hear some great

speakers from near and far discuss different aspects of cow housing that can improve herd health and dairy profitability.

The seminar will be held Tues, Dec. 1, 2009 at Rock Garden Supper Club in Green Bay from 10 am- 2 pm.



The cost of the seminar is \$20 per person, which includes registration, lunch and materials. Please mail

registration to Oconto County UWEX Attn: Karen, 301 Washington ST., Oconto, WI 54153.

Speakers and topics for the seminar are: Building Better Dairy Barns, Dr. Marina von Keyserlingk, University of British Columbia, Canada, Barn design affects cow behavior and health. Dr. von Keyserlingk will address some elements we can change in an environment to manipulate cow behavior; "In With the Good, Out With the Bad", Dr. Brian Holmes, Biological Systems Engineering; Dairy barn ventilation and cow cooling has improved substantially over the years. Dr. Holmes will discuss today's options for ventilation and cooling systems in dairy facilities; "What Ag Lenders Need from Their Clientele", Brian Hoskens, Agricultural Lender-Investor's Community Bank, Farms and bankers must work closely together. Hear a local banker's perspective on what they like to see and what they need from their producers; Dairy Beef Quality Assurance, Paul Dyk and Mark Hagedorn, UW-Extension, Dairy producers are beef producers too. This interactive presentation will focus on dairy beef quality assurance.



Dr. Marina von Keyserlingk is a professor and researcher at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She is recognized internationally for her work on care and housing of dairy cattle and calves. She gives presentations on these topics all over the world. Her studies have focused on the under-researched areas of behavior, housing, and management and how these contribute to animal health and dairy cattle welfare. Her ideas and insight should be interesting to all dairy producers, regardless of farm size. This is an excellent opportunity to hear a well-recognized speaker talk so close to home—don't miss it!

for strengthening an individual's self-concept and for creating a supportive climate within farm families. Guidelines to be kept in mind for one-minute praises are: a) focus on the other person's behavior (what you liked or appreciated), b) do it soon, c) express your true feelings (if happy, say so!), d) stop for a moment of silence, e) emphasize how much you value the other person, f) give support through touch, and g) encourage more of the same behavior.

Use adult-to-adult problem-solving in farm businesses that involve intergenerational arrangements. Significant problems arise if a parent treats a son or daughter like a child when that person is a full-grown adult. Parent-type actions such as finger pointing, head shaking, and use of such evaluative words as "always," "never," "remember," "you ought to know better," and "if I were you" can get in the way of intergenerational problem-solving. Problems also arise when adult children fall back into kid-like behaviors (using Mom as a conduit rather than approaching Dad with problems or ideas) or when either party resorts to profanity or name-calling. It's important that both parties in the relationship treat each other as adults and enter into a mutual problem-solving

process that involves: a) a clear definition of the problem, b) a look at what options are available, c) an exploration of which option will work best, and d) the choice of a specific course of action. Problem-solving works best when it's focused on one issue—try not to bring up past history or solve all of your problems at one time.

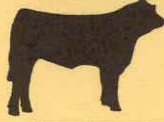
Since farm and family issues are closely intertwined, minor issues can escalate into major conflicts within a short time. Thus, it's important to deal with interpersonal issues when they first arise—when there is a low level of emotions, little distortion of the other person's position, a reasonable level of trust, and a willingness to listen to the other person. The skills outlined above should be helpful in promoting self worth and in preventing interpersonal conflict. Try them—they work!

To access more information and/or tools to help analyze your situation, link to the Extension Responds web page at: www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/farmingindifficulttimes.html

For assistance in making these tough decisions, contact your UW-Extension county agent, your Farm Business and Production Management Instructor in the Technical College or the DATCP Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474.



WISCONSIN DAIRY & BEEF INDUSTRY ANIMAL HUSBANDRY CONFERENCE FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2010



Liberty Hall- Kimberly, Wisconsin
9:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

Hosted by the UW-Extension Dairy & Livestock Teams
All dairy and beef cattle producers & industry professionals are invited to attend!



Featuring Keynote Speaker:

**Dr. Temple Grandin, Associate Professor of Animal Science-
Colorado State University**

Additional presentations by:

Dr. Paul Rapnicki, DVM MBA- University of Minnesota
Dr. Tom Noffsinger, DVM- Independent Feedlot Consultant
Dr. Janice Swanson, Director of Animal Welfare- Michigan State University
Dr. Pam Ruegg, DVM- University of Wisconsin-Madison

A full agenda can be found at our website:

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/animalhusbandryconference/about/>

For more information, please contact:
Greg Blonde, Agriculture Agent
Waupaca County UW-Extension
Phone: (715) 258-6230
E-mail: greg.blonde@ces.uwex.edu



Fall Ag Safety Tips

As we are in the middle of the fall harvesting season, we need to keep safety with machinery always in our mind. These messages are brought to you by UW-Extension and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, working with communities to promote a healthy and productive Wisconsin agriculture.

farmers and their families. In fact, farming is recognized as one of the most stressful occupations in America. It's also one of the most dangerous. During the harvest rush, take time for yourself. It's easier for your mind and body to handle the stress that this crunch time creates, if you eat a well-balanced diet and get plenty of rest. Take time also for your family and friends. One of the best ways to deal with the stress and pressure of farming is to talk openly about it with loved ones and friends.

AUGERS

On an hour for hour basis the auger is one of the most dangerous pieces of farm equipment used in agriculture. An unshielded auger can amputate fingers, hands, arms or feet in a fraction of a second. Make sure all augers and all auger drive systems are properly shielded. And, remember that the contact of an auger with a power line will likely cause a fatal shock or serious burns. Most people don't realize how far even a small auger extends into the air.



HARVEST PREPARATION

The harvest season is one of the busiest times of the year for Wisconsin's farm families. It's also one of the most dangerous. Before you begin your harvest fieldwork, make sure your combine, augers, trucks, wagons and other equipment are in top condition. Your operator's manual provides the best information for routine maintenance and preparation. The hurry and frustration when a breakdown happens often can lead to a serious injury. Take time.... ahead of time... to make sure that this harvest is season safe and productive.

SILO GAS

One of the deadly gases that Wisconsin dairy farmers encounter every year is silo gas, also known as nitrogen dioxide. Silo gas forms within a few hours after filling any silo. This gas is heavier than air, has a yellow-brown hazy appearance and smells a bit like bleach. Stay out of a newly filled silo and any surrounding areas for at least two weeks after a silo has been filled. When it is safe to enter, run the blower for at least an hour to assure that the gas has been removed and that there's a fresh supply of clean air.

STRESS AND SAFETY

The busy fall harvest season can create tremendous stress for

COMBINE FIRES

During this year's harvest season, a \$300 thousand dollar grain combine can become a smoldering scrap heap in a matter of minutes. Combine and other farm machinery fires are quite common, but they're also quite preventable. Make sure your equipment is properly adjusted and maintained according to the operator's manual. Keep all areas of combines and tractors clean - especially the engine compartment - of crop residue and other flammable material. Every combine should also be equipped with at least one ten-pound ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher.

GRAIN BINS

Grain bins, gravity flow wagons, and trucks are involved in grain suffocations or grain drownings each year in the Midwest. Grain that flows from the bottom through an auger or by gravity behaves much like quicksand. An adult in flowing grain can be pulled under the grain's surface in a matter of seconds and a small child can also be quickly suffocated. Keep children out of bins, wagons, and trucks. If you have to enter a bin to check storage conditions, shut off and lock out all unloading equipment. Treat the bin as you would with any dangerous, confined space.

CHILDREN AND FARM SAFETY

Each year, about 100 farm children die across our country as a result of work-related injuries. One reason these tragedies occur is that parents often overestimate their child's abilities to perform dangerous farm tasks. Before asking your child to perform any job or chore, ask yourself this question: Is my child physically and mentally prepared to handle the task at hand? Most child development experts suggest waiting until the child is at least age 12 or 13 before you allow them to operate a tractor or perform other potentially hazardous jobs. Even then, kids need adequate training and supervision.

Backgrounding Feeder Calves: Considerations for Fall of 2009



This growing season has given us rain, drought and cool temperatures which resulted in abundance of immature corn, or at the least

very wet shelled corn with possible test weight or quality problems. One possible option to utilize some of this corn and capture greater value for it may be to background feeder cattle.

Backgrounding feeder cattle is when lighter weight cattle (350 to 550 pounds) are grown to 700 to 900 pounds using low cost medium to lower roughage feed sources. Then they are either sold as yearlings or heavy feeders or transitioned onto a finishing diet. Pasture is often used as the primary feed source for backgrounding during the summer, but harvested feeds like corn silage and hay can also be successfully used to background calves. Target daily gains for backgrounding calves are usually between 1.5 and 2.5 pounds of gain per day. The idea is not to put finish on the calves but to have them grow frame and muscle.

Profit and loss may vary greatly between farms that choose to background calves. Careful planning and management are necessary to accomplish a successful backgrounding program.

Farmers who are considering backgrounding calves this fall as a way to utilize marginal feeds from this year's growing season need to consider several factors before committing to backgrounding. Some of these factors include:

-- Purchasing: Do I purchase beef breed calves or dairy (Holstein) steers to feed? Many beef calves will just be weaned, not vaccinated, processed or pre-conditioned in any way before a sale. While special sales may require calves be weaned 45 days, started on feed, be processed (dehorned and castrated) and have a vaccination program accomplished. One such sale would be a Badger Vac 45 Sale. Holstein steers in the 300 to 500 pound weight range may not have had an adequate proactive health care plan either.

-- Facilities: Does the farm have adequate facilities to handle, feed and house feeder cattle, or can existing facilities be modernized at a reasonable cost? Adequate facilities to handle high risk calves are essential to be able to implement proactive health programs and catch and treat sick calves. Data from several ranch to rail programs indicates that on average about

1/3 of calves from unknown health backgrounds (likely no program at all) will get sick at least once after arrival at the feedyard, and many times the percentage can be higher.

-- Livestock ability: Do you have the ability and desire to work with calves and be able to detect sick calves early? Producers need the ability to correctly diagnose sick calves by observing snotty noses, droopy ears, sunken eyes and excessive rough coughing and develop an effective treatment protocol. Following correct Beef Quality Assurance training of correct needle size, appropriate dosage and administration in the neck of injections to develop a healthy high quality feeder for the next feedlot. Always follow product labels for rates and routes (IM or Sub Q) of administration. These skills are important for successful backgrounding programs and keeping health related costs and mortality under control.

-- Time: Is there adequate time in the schedule for taking care of livestock, cleaning and bedding pens, feeding and observing the cattle? Adding an enterprise may cause other farm work to go unfinished or create demands that are not able to be met in a timely manner. On the other hand winter time can be filled with useful work and an opportunity to increase profits could be developed.

It is very critical for producers to have the feeds tested and use those values when calculating rations and costs for backgrounding calves. Feeds from immature and stressed plant most likely will not perform like feeds from "normal" plants.

As producers make their decision to background cattle, the following spreadsheets can help look at rations and costs for backgrounding; the first is a cost of production spreadsheet developed by Jeff Lehmkuhler, former UW-Extension Beef Specialist, initially developed for Holstein steers that can be adapted for all kinds of cattle by adjusting the input numbers, the second is a ration program developed by Mike Boersma at the University of Minnesota, both of these have links at the Monroe County Extension Web page at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/monroe/ag/index.html>

Additional help with cost analysis, cattle processing skills and nutritional guidelines may be obtained from your local Extension office or the UW-Extension Livestock team or by calling Bill Halfman at the Monroe County UW-Extension office at 680-269-8722 or Zen Miller at the Outagamie County Extension Office at 920-832-5119.

Did you know?

Before milking machines were invented in 1894, farmers could only milk about 6 cows per hour. Today, farmers use machines to milk more than 100 cows per hour. Dairy cows provide 90% of the world's milk supply. The best cows give over 25 gallons of milk each day. That's 400 glasses of milk! U.S. cows give an average of 2,000 gallons of milk per year. That's over 30,000 glasses of milk! Cows are ruminants, which are cud chewing mammals. Sheep and camels also are ruminants. A cow chews her cud (regurgitated, partially digested food) for up to 8 hours each day. High producing cows rest 12-14 hours per day.

Happy Thanksgiving!

