

# HELP for Managing Stress

From family problems, to BSE, to excess water, farming and rural life can be stressful and the counsellors at the Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line can help. They are trained professionals with strong farming and rural backgrounds who can help you deal with stress in healthy, productive ways.

The Farm and Rural Stress Line is a toll free, no-charge, confidential phone line and e-mail counselling service funded by the Manitoba government. Counsellors not only provide confidential psychological support, they are also aware of financial programs and resources that may be available.

"As a counsellor, I hear many of the very personal accounts of young farmers who are burdened with high debt loads and no market for their cattle," says counsellor Kim Moffat. "I know that it is reassuring to my callers when I can normalize their fears and let them know that so many other people are experiencing similar thoughts."

Farm and rural residents who use the stress line can get help clarifying problems or concerns as well as support in finding solutions. It is often feelings of shame, guilt or helplessness that prevent people from asking for help, Moffat explains. But picking up the phone and talking about them to a trained counsellor is a healthy way to relieve these feeling and start finding solutions to your situation. Counsellors keep all information private and confidential.

"We have a family farm and when times are tough, it's tough on all of us," says one caller. "Some days, I'm feeling good and my

(spouse) is down and the next day we're OK. I just wanted to talk to someone and not bring the family down when they were having a good day and I wasn't.

"I was nervous at first, but I called the line. The counsellor listened to me and knew just what I was going through. Afterwards, I felt so much better."

Rural stress is a community issue, Moffat points out, and it touches everyone whose livelihood and identity is linked to the land. Some signs of stress include:

- *headaches, muscle tension, chronic fatigue or other physical problems*
- *changes in eating or sleeping habits*
- *isolating yourself*
- *difficulty relaxing*
- *anger or other mood swings*
- *alcohol or drug abuse*
- *relationship problems*
- *feelings of shame, failure, guilt or helplessness*

The stress line also has an e-mail counselling service and a website that includes a rural resources data base. A webpage for youth will be available in the fall of 2005.

Counsellors are available weekdays, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturdays, from noon to 5 p.m. So, the next time you have a question or concern, try calling toll free **1-866-FOR-FARM (1-866-367-3276)** or e-mail [info@ruralstress.ca](mailto:info@ruralstress.ca). You'll be glad you did.

You can also visit the stress line website at [ruralstress.ca](http://ruralstress.ca)

Information provided by Jill Falloon,  
Skills Development Specialist, Brandon

The Farm and Rural Stress Line delivers outreach and public education programs for rural communities. Counsellors will present workshops in your community on topics such as:

- **understanding farm and rural stress**
- **basic stress management**
- **care for the caregiver**
- **building effective communication skills**
- **building resilient communities**

There is a nominal charge for workshops to cover basic expenses and facilitators will tailor presentations to the specific needs of your group or organization. For more information, visit the website at [ruralstress.ca](http://ruralstress.ca) or call toll free **1-866-367-3276**.

## A Leader. Who Me?

Successful communities need strong leaders and there are many young farmers and farm partners who have what it takes to lead important projects.

Effective leaders are not always highly visible in a group or organization. And while presidents and heads of national or provincial committees often show strong leadership skills, those skills also show up in local groups when there are important projects that need managing close to home.

The willingness to find out about a local farming issue, do some research, talk to others in the area about it and plan some kind of action is an example of effective leadership. Seeing something that needs fixing, finding out who has the authority and/or resources to fix it and taking whatever action is needed to get local support is another example. Joining local farming and producers' groups, giving voice to your ideas and working with others to address issues in the industry all help develop leadership skills.

### Most leaders follow five principles:

- 1. Challenge the process** – Good leaders don't wait for others to act. They recognize and support good ideas and learn more from their failures than their successes, so they aren't afraid to fail.
- 2. Inspire a shared vision** – Good leaders are aware of the issues and how different people are affected by them. They help groups resolve conflicts and inspire people to work together.
- 3. Enable others to act** – Good leaders are team players. They see the broader picture and involve everyone affected by a project. They help build trust and confidence among team members which leads to co-operative action.
- 4. Model the way** – Good leaders lead by example. Their actions are more important than their words, particularly when it comes to showing respect for others.
- 5. Encourage the heart** – Good leaders reward team members in ways that are meaningful to them, often with words of appreciation, encouragement or praise.

All these principles require good communication skills. The best leaders listen 80 per cent of the time and talk 20 per cent. Leaders who really listen can receive and give effective feedback, provide accurate information to the whole team and prevent a gap or breakdown in communication.

Recognizing your own strengths and weaknesses is an important first step in developing your leadership potential. Most good leaders learned to be effective through trial and error. They also recognize that you don't have to be the official leader of a group to be effective.

Your local GO office has resources that can help you work more effectively with volunteers and successfully manage issues in your community. Young farmers are the future of the industry, so look around your community and find a place where you can develop and contribute your leadership abilities.

Information provided by Mavis McPhail, Manager, Urban GO Team.

Prepared by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.



### DID WE MISS ANYONE?

If you know any young farmer who did not receive a copy of *The Young Farmers Newsletter* have them contact us at [youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca](mailto:youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca). We will gladly send a copy to them.

### SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We'd like to know what you think of *The Young Farmers Newsletter*, and what you'd like to read about in future issues. Email your thoughts to us at [youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca](mailto:youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca)

### VISIT THE YOUNG FARMER WEBSITE

MAFRI'S website for young farmers provides you with detailed information on programs and services profiled in this newsletter and much more. You'll also find links to valuable resources on other public and private sector sites. Visit the young farmers website today at [manitoba.ca/agriculture/financial/youngfarmers](http://manitoba.ca/agriculture/financial/youngfarmers)

# The Young Farmers Newsletter

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## A Growing Opportunities Initiative

### Dean and Brenda Gamache

Ste. Rose du Lac – Dean and Brenda Gamache didn't get any special favours from her parents Tony and Marie-Ange Guillas when they joined the family farm operation just over a decade ago. They didn't want any.

"From day one, we always paid our fair share of the operating costs," says Dean, 34. "There was no free ride. I think it was kind of a test – this was real life."

A business administration graduate from Red River College, Dean gave up a banking job to work for his father-in-law and other farmers in the area. His choice allowed him and Brenda to remain in the communities where they were raised, surrounded by family and friends.

That was particularly important to Brenda, who was teaching in the area. She wanted a home base where her children could grow deep roots. Nothing suits her better than to be raising her own three children in the home where her mother raised her. "For me, it was very important to be back home," she says. "That's something that I value."

Brenda's father Tony, now 61, had converted the family farm from grain to cattle when Dean decided to change careers in the mid '90s. He worked for his father-in-law during haying season and helped other farmers in the area at seeding and harvesting. Dean's parents didn't farm, but he'd spent much of his childhood helping relatives who did.

"We talked about it and we decided we would like to try farming and Tony agreed to give us the opportunity to do that," Dean says.

The Gamaches started small, initially owning only 15 cows and trading labour for feed. "We kept track of the costs and we also kept track of the hours that I spent working on the farm and then we subtracted the two."

Over the past decade, they've built their ownership of the combined 200-head calf herd to 45 per cent. They've also gradually been accumulating a land base to support their own operation someday. The two generations, who own their land separately, operate together under the unincorporated name Stoneridge Ranch.

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Dean tends to cattle on Stoneridge Ranch.

Stress?  
When you need someone to talk to... we're here. We offer support, counselling and information for farm & rural people. Confidential.

We're just a phone call away.

1-866-367-3276  
(FOR FARM)

[www.ruralstress.ca](http://www.ruralstress.ca)

GROWING Opportunities

Canada Manitoba

Dean Gamache and his father-in-law, Tony Guillas, hosted visiting producers during the province's first Provincial Grazing Tour this past July. Producers from across Manitoba visited farms in the North Parkland area, checking out new and different grazing, watering and fencing systems in action.

Tour hosts found questions and comments from the visiting producers made them step back and evaluate their projects for things like efficiency, lower costs, increased environmental sustainability and adaptation to local geography. Visiting producers got plenty of new ideas and a chance to discuss them with other producers and industry people. Guest speakers covered such topics as how to get the most out of your native pasture, and how to make top dollar for your cattle.

The tour will be held again, in another part of the province, next summer. In the meantime, some of the tour's speakers will discuss the latest grazing technologies and environmental sustainability practices at the upcoming 2005 Manitoba Grazing School, December 7 and 8 at Keystone Centre in Brandon.

**For more information:**  
**Manitoba Forage Council**  
**204-482-6315**

**Email:**  
[mfc@mbforagecouncil.mb.ca](mailto:mfc@mbforagecouncil.mb.ca)

**Website:**  
[mbforagecouncil.mb.ca](http://mbforagecouncil.mb.ca)



## Farm Dads are Changing with the Times

It's calving season, your kids are telling you about problems at school, you're making supper and planning out how to get one child to piano, the other to 4-H and the third to the school play rehearsal... The life of a farm dad can be hectic these days.

"It feels like riding a horse with one rein sometimes," says Phil Adams, a Deloraine rancher and father of two. "You can be running in circles but you're never too far away from home."

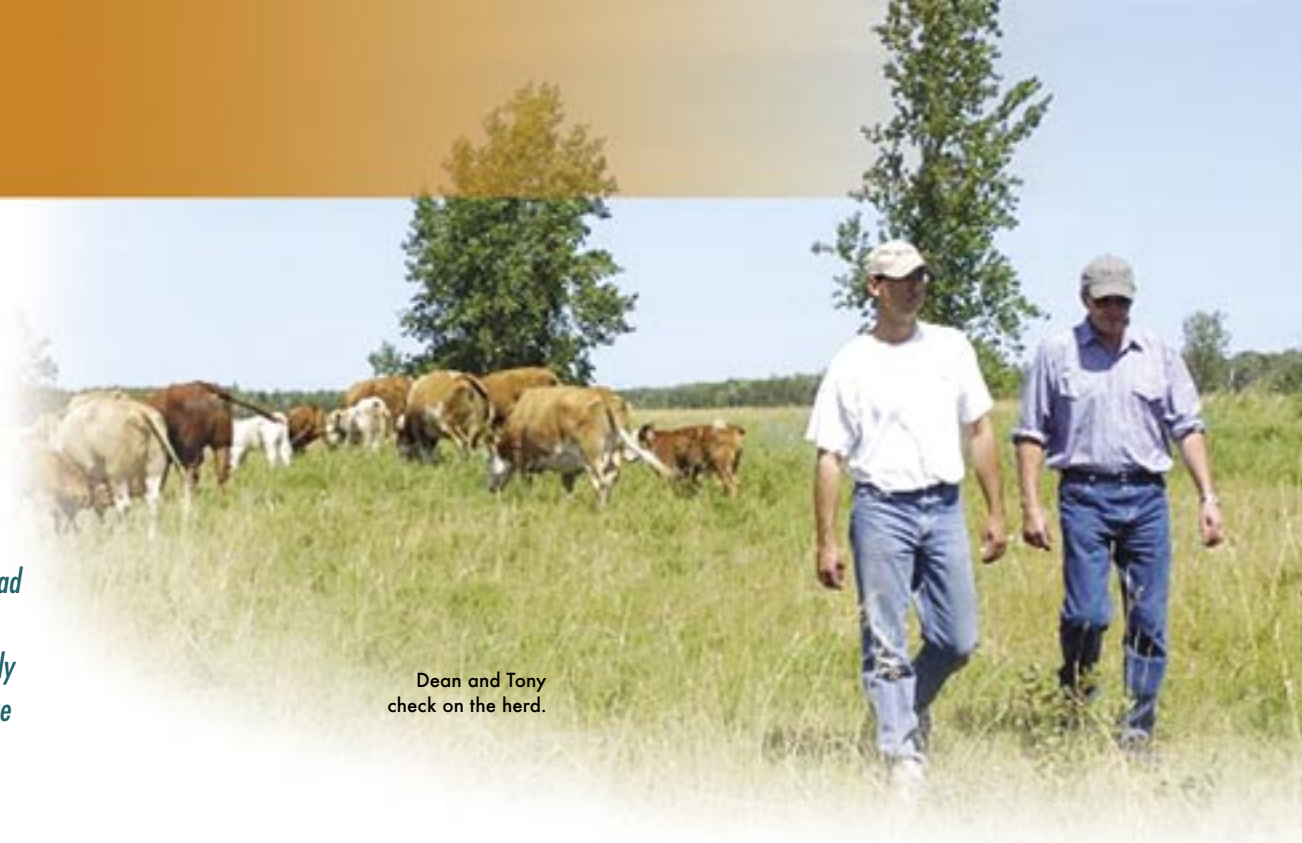
The times are changing and the lives of today's farm dads are very different from previous generations. Research from the Vanier Institute of the Family indicates that men's participation in the care of children and older family members is increasing across the country.

Today's farm dads balance a combination of farm work, community activities, housework and child care. And much of the change is because more and more of today's farm moms are holding down jobs off the farm.

"Statistics are now reflecting what we have known for some time," says Kim Moffat, counsellor with Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line. The division of labour looks very different than it did 10 years ago. As farm women go out to work, the men are taking on more housework and child care.

This non-traditional way of living can present challenges in families when an equal division of labour confuses old male and female roles. At one time, moms were expected to take children to doctors' appointments, but now it may be dad who does it because mom may be doing shift work at an off-farm job.

As women start to assume more of the financial responsibilities in farm families, the division of labour has to shift. From a farm management perspective, dealing with male and female role changes makes good business sense.



Dean and Tony check on the herd.

*"Some of the best advice I've ever had has is: if you can do something really well, you can make money at it..."*

it was recently named Conservation Family of the Year by the Turtle River Watershed Conservation District, and why it was one of the finalists for Graziest of the Year Award handed out annually at the Manitoba Grazing School. The farm is often the site of tours organized by the local MAFRI Growing Opportunities (GO) office, which puts Dean's public speaking skills to the test.

The couple learned about facing up to life's challenges back in the days when they both belonged to 4-H. Brenda participated in the 4-H Light Horse and Pony Club while Dean belonged to a variety club in the area. Both say it was a hands-on learning experience that promoted personal growth. "Man, are you terrified when you are nine-years-old doing public speaking," recalls Dean. "But I think maybe in the long run, it probably helped me out."

The family's ongoing willingness to face challenges and try new things made Stoneridge Ranch one of the first in the area to adopt rotational grazing strategies. They winter their cows in the cornfield, which dramatically reduces the amount of manure to be hauled out in the spring. Three seasons ago, the family began moving the herd's calving dates from February/March to April/May. It was a labour management strategy. They are planning their labour management tactics for the future, when Tony may decide to quit or to cut back on the amount of labour he does.

The partnership's combined acreage has grown to 2,300 acres (920 hectares), most of which is pasture. They raise 450 acres (180 hectares) of hay, 160 acres (64 hectares) of grain for feed and 60 acres (24 hectares) of corn to be used for spot grazing.

As equipment is replaced, Tony contributes the trade-in value, while the younger generation assumes the cost of new purchases. As succession plans go, this one has been fairly seamless. But that's not by accident. Not only have these two families strictly adhered to sound business principles, they've sought outside advice to ensure they stay on track.

They also took a 10-week, farm-family transfer course offered by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) and have since regularly consulted with a MAFRI representative based in Dauphin. Their operating agreement is reviewed annually. They find a third party helpful "just to give us suggestions," says Dean. "You know he has no vested interest in it either way."

Both families rely heavily on their local MAFRI farm production advisor in Ste. Rose - particularly for bringing new ideas to the area. But having outside support is no substitute for maintaining open communication day by day.

Dean and Tony hold meetings over coffee every Monday morning. They rarely disagree on the game plan. "We can usually come to an agreement," says Dean. "But when it comes right down to it, the final decision about what gets done around here is Tony's. That's never been written in our farm operating agreement, but it's understood."

Dean sees it as an opportunity to learn from his father-in-law's experience. "I ask him why he makes the decision," Dean explains. "It's the logic behind it I want to know, because down the road, I'll have to make a decision someday and it may be based on the same reasoning."

Tony is committed to preparation and planning. While Dean originally found it difficult, he eventually understood the advantages of management planning - dealing with issues before they become a crisis.

That's not to say Dean never gets his way. He just knows that if he brings a new idea forward, he'd better have some numbers to back it up. Incorporating new ideas is a standard feature of this operation, which is why

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Dean, Brenda and Tony share some family time with the children.