

FARMERS AS PATIENTS – TIPS FOR TALKING WITH FARMERS

1. COMMUNICATION

- Farmers may not talk about stress with others easily.

2. EARLY INTERVENTION

- Farmers may ignore emotional distress and mental health symptoms for a long time.

3. OPPORTUNITY

- Farmers may present with physical problems, but this is a great opportunity to assess emotional distress.

4. TRIGGER QUESTIONS

- Important to talk openly about the potential effects of stress:
 - How is the farm going?
 - How is your family coping?
 - How are you feeling about how the farm is going?

5. REFERRAL AND MANAGEMENT

- Assess suicide risk and mental state - mental health referral if appropriate.
- Check alcohol/drug use as a coping method.
- Talking about importance of maintaining social support.
- Getting support about farm and financial management.
- Importance of self-monitoring of stress.

6. RESOURCES

- Giving relevant resources about support services e.g., fridge magnet.

7. FOLLOW-UP

- Emphasise importance of returning for follow-up check.

Adapted from Sartore, G., Kelly, B., & Stain, H. J. (2007). Drought and its effect on mental health: How GPs can help. *Australian Family Physician*, 36, 990-993.

