

## A CHALLENGING REALITY

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2019 has been a tough year for everyone. Weather conditions played havoc with farmers across the province, from seeding to harvest. In the Lakeland, first cut hay was made into September, and harvest will continue into next year. Harvesting in the spring used to be a once in a blue moon occurrence, but now seems like an annual event since 2016. This is extremely heartbreakening and stressful for many operations. Coupled with a volatile and minefield like trade situation and rail disruptions puts farmers in a precarious situation. Input costs are climbing, the choice of facing the costs of grain drying versus dockage, and having your crop left out in the field are compounding the stress of farmers everywhere.

*Mental health is just as important to our lives as our physical health.* It is fairly easy to take care of our physical health, however we tend to neglect our mental wellbeing and ignore or are confused about the signs of deteriorating mental fitness. Mental health is not the same thing as the absence of mental illness. It can include: how we feel about ourselves, the world and our lives; the ability to solve problems and overcome challenges; the ability to build relationships with others and contribute to our community; and the ability to achieve our goals. No one has perfect mental health all the time, but ongoing issues can compound and overwhelm us. Just like cattle we like to ruminate, except in our case it is repeatedly thinking about the same thing. This is usually paired with worrying and can create a cycle that increases anxiety and depression. With worry we tend to think of future issues or the “what ifs”, imagining the worst possible outcome. Rumination is focusing on the past filled with regret usually or the “if only” repetitive thinking. When we get stuck in the rut of rumination and worry,

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**Continued from page 1** instead of clearly thinking, trying to reduce the distress and overcome the problem, we end up making the problem larger. This can lead to destructive behaviors such as chemical coping (drugs/alcohol), self-harm, comfort eating etc. This cycle becomes addictive, and we need to find ways to break the habit. Healthy thinking does not mean positive thinking. No matter how bubbly the personality, no one can look at things positively all the time. Healthy thinking means looking at a situation in its entirety; the good, the bad, the ugly and all the grey neutral areas before coming to a conclusion.

Stress by itself is not a mental illness, but if it gets out of control or lasts too long it can lead to anxiety and depression. Stress from time to time, and for brief periods is relatively normal for everyone. We need to develop our problem solving skills. Problems/issues left unsolved can lead to small problems becoming enormous. Problems that don't go away can take a toll on our well-being and we can end up feeling frustrated, stressed or maybe even depressed and hopeless. Often when we are stressed, anxious and/or depressed we isolate ourselves. Ask for help; be it friends, family or professionals. Social support is a key aspect for improving mental well-being.

We are all struggling with our own battles, so be kind to one another. During the holiday season if you notice someone withdrawn and missing from the family get-togethers, reach out and check in. Don't be afraid to directly approach the issue. It can be dangerous to not directly, honestly and openly discuss mental well-being and thoughts of suicide.

Take time for self care. Enjoy a simple pleasure such as watching the sunrise, a good meal, or a game. Spend time with people who make you laugh and enjoy life such as a neighbor, friend or family. Forgive yourself. When you practice compassion for yourself you can easily show it for others. Don't be afraid to ask others for help. A different perspective can often show us a solution that we ourselves cannot see.



# Farming Mental Health *in Canada*

1 in 8 jobs in Canada is in the agriculture and agri-food industry<sup>1</sup>

In a survey of more than 1100 farmers:<sup>2</sup>

35% met the criteria for depression

58% met the criteria for anxiety

45% were highly stressed

40% were uneasy seeking professional help

## Stressors many are out of farmers' control

- Weather
- Government regulations
- Debt and finances
- Commodity prices
- Isolation
- Livestock well-being
- Culture of the resilient, strong farmer
- Family conflicts
- Long hours
- Machinery breakdowns
- Public perception and stigmatization of farming

## What can be done

- Show appreciation for farmers through public awareness campaigns and strategies
- Check in with farming community members
- Tell and share personal stories to reduce stigma
- Build capacity in mental health awareness and prevention
- Promote available telephone help lines and e-mental health services for farmers



## Practicing self-care

Ask for help and offer to help. Reach out to your community.

Set aside time to disconnect from technology. Use that time to exercise or just relax.

Make the most of the sleep you're getting. Think about your nightly routine and your surroundings.

Talk to someone. Opening up is not a sign of weakness but takes strength. Where you can go:

<https://www.domore.ag/resources>

If you or someone else is in crisis, visit your local emergency department or call 911 immediately

<sup>1</sup>Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Economic impacts of Canadian agriculture and agri-food infographic

<sup>2</sup>Andria Jones Bitton et al., University of Guelph

Created in partnership with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association



CASA | ACSA

CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SÉCURITÉ AGRICOLE



Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

## Simple Ways to Practice Mental Fitness

Here are some simple ways we can all start to practice mental fitness suggested by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

- **Daydream** – Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a dream location. Breathe slowly and deeply. Whether it's a beach, a mountaintop, a hushed forest or a favourite room from your past, let the comforting environment wrap you in a sensation of peace and tranquility.
- **“Collect” positive emotional moments** – Make it a point to recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, tenderness, confidence, or other positive emotions.
- **Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts** – Negative thoughts can be insistent and loud. Learn to interrupt them. Don't try to block them (that never works), but don't let them take over. Try distracting yourself or comforting yourself, if you can't solve the problem right away.
- **Do one thing at a time** – For example, when you are out for a walk or spending time with friends, turn off your cell phone and stop making that mental “to do” list. Take in all the sights, sounds and smells you encounter.
- **Exercise** – Regular physical activity improves psychological well-being and can reduce depression and anxiety. Joining an exercise group or a gym can also reduce loneliness, since it connects you with a new set of people sharing a common goal.
- **Enjoy hobbies** – Taking up a hobby brings balance to your life by allowing you to do something you enjoy because you want to do it, free of the pressure of everyday tasks. It also keeps your brain active.
- **Set personal goals** – Goals don't have to be ambitious. You might decide to finish that book you started three years ago; to take a walk around the block every day; to learn to knit or play bridge; to call your friends instead of waiting for the phone to ring. Whatever goal you set, reaching it will build confidence and a sense of satisfaction.
- **Keep a journal** – Expressing yourself after a stressful day can help you gain perspective, release tension and even boost your body's resistance to illness.
- **Share humour** – Life often gets too serious, so when you hear or see something that makes you smile or laugh, share it with someone you know. A little humour can go a long way to keeping us mentally fit!
- **Volunteer** – Volunteering is called the “win-win” activity because helping others makes us feel good about ourselves. At the same time, it widens our social network, provides us with new learning experiences and can bring balance to our lives.
- **Treat yourself well** – Cook yourself a good meal. Have a bubble bath. See a movie. Call a friend or relative you haven't talked to in ages. Sit on a park bench and breathe in the fragrance of flowers and grass. Whatever it is, do it just for you.



### Alberta Farmer Distress Line: 1-877-303-2642

This toll free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week. This confidential crisis line is to help farmers and ranchers with: stress; anxiety; depression; suicide; emotional or psychiatric crises.

For other information or non-emergencies check out: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/amh.aspx>

# Environmental Farm Plans

The environment is becoming a more prominent issue. It is a large factor in marketing agriculture and food products in today's global markets. Consumers are demanding more transparency and are demanding high quality and safe products. Reputation of food safety is critical to retain and gain access to domestic and international markets.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) provide a tool for producers to self analyze their operation and identify environmental risks, current standards, areas for improvement and also highlight what they are doing well. Having a completed EFP allows producers to access different funding opportunities, such as the Growing Forward Stewardship Program. It is also useful in product branding that demonstrates specific environmental standards.

## The EFP Process

An EFP can be completed through workshops, online or one-on-one session(s). The EFP first identifies the soil and farm site characteristics. Following this, the producer completes only the relevant chapters that apply to their operation; such as wintering sites, fertilizer, pesticides, crop management etc.

Upon completion the EFP is submitted to a Technical Assistant for review. Once reviewed the EFP will be returned along with a letter of completion.

The EFP is a living document and should be reviewed and updated periodically.

**If you wish to complete an EFP or have any questions regarding EFP please contact Kellie at the LARA office at 780-826-7260**

## LARA Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program

Watersheds are unique, come in many shapes and sizes and can cross many different land uses. The simple definition of a watershed is the area of land that catches precipitation, and drains into a wetland, stream, river or groundwater. The riparian zone is the interface between the upland and a water course. This area is heavily influenced by water, how and where it flows and is reflected in the plants, soil characteristics and wildlife that are found there. Riparian areas have a large role in water quality, quantity and biodiversity. They provide eight key functions to: trap and store sediment; build and maintain banks and shorelines; store water; recharge aquifers; filter and buffer water; reduce and dissipate energy; create primary production; and maintain biodiversity by providing habitat for plants, wildlife and fish. These Ecological Services benefit people, other living organisms, and the overall functioning of interconnected natural systems within watersheds. Conservation and restoration of wetlands and riparian areas in Alberta are needed for sustainably functioning watersheds.



LARA has available funding ending December of 2020 for: offsite watering systems, riparian fencing, watercourse crossings, and wetland enhancements such as pond levelers, exclusion fencing and riparian plantings. So apply for your projects as soon as possible.

Forms and information for the program are available online at: <http://www.laraonline.ca/farming-resources/environmental/funding-opportunities/>

Or by emailing [sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca](mailto:sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca)



# CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3 billion federal-provincial-territorial investment in the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector set to begin in April 2018, and is the successor of the 2013-18 Growing Forward 2 partnership. In Alberta, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership represents a federal - provincial investment of \$406 million in strategic programs and initiatives for the agricultural sector.

Currently accepting funding applications is the Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change program and Farm Water Supply.

**Funding Opportunities** Stewardship covers projects such as:

Riparian Area Fencing and Management	Permanent fencing and potentially cross fencing	Funding Maximum: \$75,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Year-Round / Summer Watering Systems	Portable or permanent systems that are not in your yard site	Funding Maximum: \$50,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Watercourse Crossings	Construction materials needed for watercourse crossing in accordance with the Water Act	Funding Maximum: \$10,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Riparian Management Strategies - OPEN	Activities which are not explicitly ineligible and which can be shown to meet or exceed the program goals. Potential projects include: pond levelers for beaver management, riparian buffer establishment, native prairie management, grazing management consulting, wetland restoration	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Relocation of Livestock facility or confined wintering site	Relocate a livestock facility that poses a significant risk to water quality or the environment, and properly remove the existing facility	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Improved Land Application of Manure	To adopt technologies that result in more efficient nutrient use and decrease nutrient loss through run-off and volatilization. Eligible costs include: load cells, flow control meters, on the go nutrient analysis technology, compost turners and much more.	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Agricultural Input and Waste	Improved pesticide management; improved nutrient management (sectional controls); plastic rollers; shelterbelts; wetland assessments	Funding Maximum: \$7,000 - \$15,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%

## More Information On Funding Opportunities

For more information on these funding opportunities go to: <https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/index.html>

Call the LARA office to set up a time to go over funding possibilities and for assistance with the application forms.

Please note that applications must be approved prior to work being done or purchases made to be eligible for the funding.



Stuck in the mud? Consider an offsite watering system.



## Weed Alert

*Alberta*

Agriculture  
and Forestry

### Jimsonweed – Not Common to Alberta

#### ALL PARTS OF THE PLANT ARE POISONOUS

**Concern:** Jimsonweed (a.k.a Devil's Trumpet) is a serious weed in cultivated land in the United States and eastern Canada. The plant has toxic effects that have resulted in death to livestock and humans that ingest it.

**Plant:** The plant has smooth thick red to purple stems that can reach 2 meters tall. Leaves have irregular toothed margins 10-20 cm long. Flowers are white to purplish, 5 point trumpet shape, 7-10 cm long. Seed pod is 2-5cm wide, has spines, is egg shaped and may contain up to 600-700 seeds per capsule. The seed capsule will explode expelling the seeds once mature. Has distinctive sour repulsive odour.

**Where to Find This Weed:** This invasive weed has been showing up in canola fields. Jimsonweed has been reported recently in the Municipal District of Peace while producers are swathing canola.

**Control:** Jimsonweed seed is difficult to clean from canola, removal prior to combining is recommended. Jimsonweed should be pulled from fields prior to swathing down, once cut the seed capsules may mature into viable seeds for next year. When hand pulling, wear gloves and long sleeves and double bag the plants for the landfill disposal. In this year of feed shortages, canola stubble should not be baled up for feed where plants have been found. These practices will increase risk for poisoning in livestock feed.

Do not compost. Do not burn, as this will release toxins in the air and may cause secondary poisoning.

**Early detection and eradication is very important to stop the spread.**

Please report any sightings to Krista Zuzak, Chief Provincial Plant Officer, Agriculture & Forestry at (587) 985 2277 or [krista.zuzak@gov.ab.ca](mailto:krista.zuzak@gov.ab.ca).

Photos courtesy of Westlock County

## Pest Watch

*To report prohibited noxious weeds call the Alberta Pest Surveillance System at :*

**310-APSS (2777)**

# Holistic Management with Kelly Sidoryk

February 21-23 and March 6-8, 2020

Flat Lake Hall 59403-Range Road 484

For over 35 years farmers and ranchers in Alberta have used Holistic Management to improve land, grow nutritious food, gain control of their finances and improve their quality of life.

**Holistic Management is a values-based decision making framework that integrates all aspects of planning for sustainable social, economic and environmental considerations.** Each and every operation is unique and by using Holistic Management farmers and ranchers can achieve improvements in their land and mitigate risk.

## Module 1

Introduction to HM

Paradigm shifts

Enhanced decision making through testing questions

Developing holistic goals for higher quality of life, more profit and healthier land

Secrets of effective communication - working with your team

## Module 2

Review principles of analytical testing questions

Learn about using tools and their effects

Grazing principles

Develop a biological plan

## Module 3

Principles of holistic financial planning

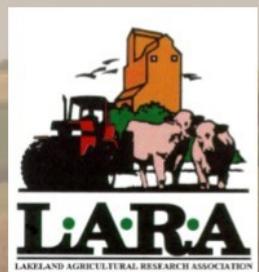
Definition of wealth

Enterprise analysis

Plan a profit

Develop your operations annual financial plan

Create a learning (support) group



There is no blanket solution or one size fits all approach to management. This course allows you to consider your own goals and what would work best for you and help you to get to where you want to go. The course is laid out into three modules over the two, three day sessions. The Cost of the Holistic Management Course is \$1,500.00 per farm unit.

If you would like additional details for this or you are interested to register please call Kellie at **LARA at 780-826-7260** or email [sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca](mailto:sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca)

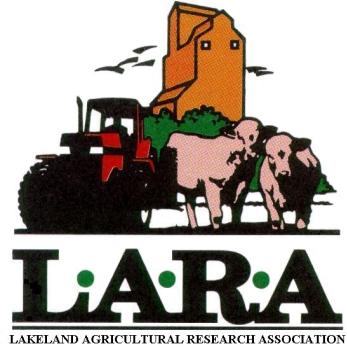
# Lakeland Agricultural Research Association

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Sustainable farming encompasses a wide range of practices and principles; combining environmental stewardship with profitability and ensuring that the family farm will be there for generations to come.



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**Like us on Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lakeland-Agricultural-Research-Association/316266591732449>

## *Why Take The Holistic Management Course?*

- \* A perfect time to gather with your family/team and work on goal development and the next year's plan— including the financial, social, land, and biological/grazing
- \* Learn strategies and tools to improve decision making in these times of rapid change
- \* Understand the principles behind Holistic Management and the HM framework
- \* Examine the financial component and plan a profit that aligns with your farms' vision
- \* Build a plan that ensures long term success of the triple bottom line: people, finances, land and livestock
- \* Consider the ecosystem processes on the land and ways to build resiliency and regeneration

**People don't plan to fail; they fail to plan.**

**WWW.LARAONLINE.CA**

