



SOS Yorkes and the National Enterprise for Rural and Community and Wellbeing have been working together to help local farmers.

The organisations have co-designed a series of stories addressing some of the issues, taken from 50-plus interviews with farmers from across South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. Recurring themes include recognising distress and anxiety; economic, weather and other downturns and distress; marital stress and needing to talk to someone; help seeking and the road to recovery. Once a month, the YP Country Times will run the latest story, as well as contact details for support services.

Surviving ups and downs on the family farm

Joe, 55, is the fourth generation to call the family farm home.

Through good times and bad, the family has survived it all.

Joe is married to Jessica and their two children, Pete, 18, and Sarah, 14, are rapidly growing up.

Pete is studying agriculture at university in Adelaide and is thinking of following in his father's footsteps. This is not surprising as he wants to be just like Joe.

But Joe is worried.

Pete has seen some of the struggles the farm has gone through, but Joe had never really told him the toll it takes.

"The stress has always been there...when you are wondering where the next dollar is coming from and you're the only one that can solve the problem, the stress can build up very quickly," Joe said.

"Will there actually be a farm for Pete to come to?"

Joe has struggled at times to balance work with the pressures he feels from his parents, siblings and even Jess, especially when the situation on the farm has been hard-pressed.

External challenges including drought, floods and frost have wrought havoc on the farm.

When he and Jess were about to get married, the farm was destroyed by frost.

"We lost everything overnight," he said.

Joe carries the weight of his brother's experience as well, who left his farm \$250,000 in debt amid rising interest rates.

Joe would wake up in the morning and only see the negatives, he said.

"You're thinking the worst and it's terrible," he said.

"We hear farmers talk — it's that sense of failure and the threat they might not be able to continue farming and it could be the end of the line for a particular property.

"That's the kind of thing that can push them to want to, yeah, end their lives."

Joe said he has often wondered how he was going to get through.

Joe recently made a change to his lifestyle, realising he needed to seek help.

It began when Joe heard one of his farming friends casually share their own mental health issues at a field day.

Joe, who had started to struggle with self-medication and alcohol abuse, knew he needed to do something for himself and his family.

He made an appointment with the same rural outreach counsellor as his friend.

"I learned there is a very, very close, important link between financial wellbeing and depression, there's a link and I know that (now)," he said.

Most importantly Joe thought Pete and his hopes and dreams for the farm; he had new lessons to share with him on his own farming journey.

David Radford

If you or someone in your family or community might benefit from support for mental health and wellbeing reach out to your GP or a community counsellor.

For immediate assistance, contact:

Mensline: 1300 789 978

Regional Access: 1300 032 186 (for rural SA)

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

Suicide call back service: 1300 659 467



Better health for better wealth

ANIMAL health is one of the key drivers for a profitable livestock enterprise, but some health conditions can fly under the radar.

To help producers get a better understanding of what sheep and cattle health conditions are prevalent within their region, the South Australian Livestock Biosecurity Extension Team plans to host workshops across South Australia, including at Minlaton on Wednesday, September 15.

Animal Health Australia extension manager and biosecurity extension officer Dr Emily Buddle said promoting early detection and prevention of disease was critical when dealing with animal health.

"By attending these workshops, producers and their staff will be better prepared to prevent, mitigate and manage an animal pest or disease outbreak on their farms," she said.

"Improving awareness and understanding of the animal health threats in the region is a crucial step for planning and will ultimately help reduce the stress on a business if disease does find its way onto the property."

The Better Health for Better Wealth workshops are funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions' Red Meat and Wool Growth Program and are designed to focus specifically on the health conditions that affect livestock enterprises in each region.

Livestock SA project manager and biosecurity extension officer Pene Keynes said utilising intelligence from the Enhanced Abattoir Surveillance Program for sheep, as well as local insights from vets and producers, ensured the topics and demonstrations at each event would be highly relevant and tailored to meet the region's needs.

"We have worked hard to create a program that will explore both local and state-wide health issues, as well as the implementation of biosecurity for business continuity," she said.

These workshops will provide an opportunity for producers to engage directly with the brains trust of animal health including local veterinarians, Biosecurity SA staff, and key industry experts.

For more information, and to register, visit <https://livestocksa.org.au>.



LIVESTOCK HEALTH... South Australia's livestock biosecurity extension officers Dr Emily Buddle and Pene Keynes are hosting a series of Better Health for Better Wealth workshops across the state, including at Minlaton.

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