



Stress Management, Communication to be Focus of Farm Couples Weekend Workshops

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MADISON – Tough economic times in the agricultural sector can take a toll on farm families, with increased stress associated with financial challenges often leading to difficulties communicating and making effective decisions.

To help Wisconsin farm couples learn about stress management techniques, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension are hosting a series of six Farm Couples Weekend Workshops this winter.

Roger Williams, a farm family communications consultant and DATCP Farm Center volunteer mediator, will facilitate the sessions. Extension educators from the local areas and Farm Center staff will be available to provide information about other Extension and Farm Center programs and services.

“Farm couples interested in learning about stress management techniques, improving farm family communications and decision-making and goal-setting exercises should consider attending a Farm Couples Weekend Workshop,” said Jayne Krull, bureau director of DATCP’s Agriculture and Farm Center. “On many farms, farm couples are part of a unique partnership in that both spouses are typically engaged in the operation in some way, which makes this format especially effective.”

These weekend workshops are designed to help farm couples:

- Deal more effectively with stress
- Learn about personality differences
- Communicate more effectively with each other and other family members
- Make plans for the future
- Learn about helpful resources in the community, including UW-Extension and DATCP

There is no cost to attend. Refreshments, meals, lodging, instruction and materials will be provided and financial assistance for childcare, farm labor or mileage may be available. For more information about financial assistance, contact the Farm Center at 800-942-2474.

The schedule is as follows:

- January 18/19, 2020 - Mineral Point
- February 15/16, 2020 - Wausau
- February 29/March 1, 2020 - Appleton
- March 7/8, 2020 - Waupun
- March 21/22, 2020 - Eau Claire
- April 4/5, 2020 - Rice Lake (CANCELLED)

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Pre-registration and a \$50/couple deposit is required, with the deposit refunded on the second day of the weekend. Interested couples can reserve a spot by purchasing a "ticket" at <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/farmstress/farmcouples/>. If you prefer to pay by check, you will need to register at the link and send your \$50 check **payable to UW CDP** to: UW Center for Dairy Profitability, c/o Jenny Vanderlin, 203 Taylor Hall, 427 Lorch St., Madison, WI 53706. Registration deadline is one week prior to each weekend.

Each weekend will be open to the first 10 couples who register and provide the refundable deposit.

The weekend begins Saturday at 9:30 a.m. with on-site check-in and ends Sunday at 3:00 pm.

For the most up-to-date information, go to the Resilient Farms, Families, Businesses and Communities website: <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/farmstress/>

The Wisconsin Farm Center, part of DATCP's Division of Agricultural Development, provides information and support to farmers and their families. The Farm Center partners with industry groups, government and educational entities and other stakeholders to provide services such as financial and business consultation, farm succession planning, counseling services, conflict mediation, and consultation related to production opportunities and challenges.

The Governor's 2019-21 biennial budget created an appropriation of \$100,000 each year to provide mental health assistance to farmers and farm families. DATCP's Farm Center is utilizing the funds to develop several new farmer mental health initiatives, including the farm couples workshops and other workshops for farmers and farm families starting early next year.

The appropriation also provided for continued funding of the Farm Center's program for confidential mental health counseling vouchers for distressed farm families, as well as for training sessions and workshops for counselors/peer facilitators dealing with farmers and farm families.

The workshops are partially funded by a CHS community giving grant received by UW Madison Division of Extension.