

# ASK FOR HELP - (Farmers and Suicide)

By Don Fraser

Suicide is an issue that can affect farmers as much as any other sectors of society.

People often mistakenly opt for suicide, as a 'way out' when they are in trouble.

Following the US finance sector fallout, David Kellerman aged 41, who headed up the Freddie Mac Corporation, ended his own life as have some others who have lost fortunes, in the great credit crunch. Suicide has also been the choice of some New Zealanders, as the rough times bite. Among these some have been in the building industry and in the farming sector.

A farming friend of mine, who was suicidal, explained that the reason to take one's life is very compelling, when you 'are there'. His mind told him, it was what he wanted to do. He had rationalised suicide as being acceptable and justifiable. He made a couple of attempts, which fortunately resulted in those around him realising, he needed support. He has since had counselling, seen a doctor and is now back on his feet.

I guess the point here, is that, as he explained, it was 'his mind' that was telling him to end his life. Psychologists will tell you that how we view the world, is more often than not, well away from the reality of the actual situation. In other words, what we believe as 'being real and true', is not necessarily correct. Suicide may follow depression and at the moment, you could argue, that there is plenty to be depressed about. In almost every paper you read, every television programme you watch and all the media can talk about, is doom and gloom.

If you put that negativity on top of, the long hours of hard work, sleep deprivation, lack of meaningful social contact, grumpy relationships, financial pressure, then yes, you can understand why some farmers are feeling 'less than chipper'. We, or our minds, can make more out of 'those bad feelings', which can then build up to the point, where we become 'feeling based' rather than 'reality based'.

Our feelings take over, anxiety can make us turn inward and everything gets 'on top of us'. Bad relationships, un-resolved family expectations and issues can also add to the mix. BUT, it is only our mind that is telling us, all this stuff, it is not necessarily reality. We may have gone from living in our community and the world, to living in our heads.

## SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- We have to ask for help, and that help is out there. It is essential that we talk to our partners, talk to our bankers, talk to our doctors, consultants and so on. We will find that increasingly,

these professionals are being trained, to understand and look for the signs and symptoms in people, who are suffering from depression and who may be suicidal.

- We need to identify that it is 'feelings based' and not reality.
- We need to seek help and insist on support.
- We may need to make a list of all issues and take that list to our doctor.
- We may need to ask for a longer appointment, than the usual 10 - 15 minutes that is usually allowed.
- We can call the Rural Support Trust helpline on 0800 787 254, Lifeline on 0800 543 354, or Samaritans on 0800 726 666
- We need to call for help, before doing anything that may be deemed 'silly'.
- We need to understand that the feeling of being depressed is not a weakness. We (especially men), do not like talking about ourselves, our feeling or our illnesses, as we feel it shows weakness. This is not correct. Asking for help is the best thing you can do for yourself and as an example for your children and loved ones.

Do you do know someone, who is showing signs of depression or possibly suicidal? Please, step up and support them. Ask them some obvious questions. Ensure they have phone numbers to call if an emergency situation arises. Encourage them to get professional help and do not forget about them. Keep in constant contact and ring them at the same time everyday.

#### IN SUMMARY:

Feelings of desperation and hopelessness might become more prevalent as the economy hardens and people lose what they believe is important to them.

If thoughts of suicide are becoming a priority in your mind, then get some professional help, immediately.

If you are a friend or onlooker of a person in this situation, stop looking on and step up and support your friend. Doing nothing is totally unacceptable.

People and the Community need to care for each other, more than ever. This recession will pass, and so will the bad feelings.

Keep a positive attitude, be happy with, and value what you have.

**These are the opinions of Don Fraser of Fraser Farm Finance.  
Any decisions made should not be based on this article alone and appropriate professional assistance should be sought.**

**Don Fraser is the Principal of Fraser Farm Finance and a consultant to the Farming Industry.  
Contact him on 0800 777 675 or 021 777 675.**