



Hotwire

Newsletter of the Wanganui Rural Community Board

Keeping well: Depression on the farm



Federated Farmers has produced this card, which lists support services available

Social isolation, weather events, financial pressure, changes to compliance, health issues, reduced pay-outs, family or relationship break ups and lack of support services...

When it comes to factors which can affect mental health, rural people have their fair share.

And the statistics back it up. According to the Ministry of Health, the suicide rate in rural areas is 12.5 in every 100,000 people, whereas amongst the urban

Those words ring true to Wanganui Rural Community Board Chair Alan Taylor, who has seen rural people affected by depression. He urges everyone to be continually aware that living and working rurally can be stressful and to seek help when needed.

"We have newsletters like *Hotwire* to talk about rural issues and as a Board we advocate for the financial and physical wellbeing of farmers and the wellbeing of the land, but we aren't as keen to talk about our mental wellbeing. My advice is to be supportive of families and be aware of things which could cause stress. It's a really important issue for our community."

Sharing experiences gives hope

Balance Whanganui peer support worker Linda says, in her experience, one of the barriers for rural people experiencing mental health issues is that some people don't want others to know they are facing a mental health issue.

"There is still stigma around mental health and addiction which can make it difficult for people to seek help and support. People want to keep their business private, especially if they have a standing in the community. Isolation also has a part to play. Services in the rural areas aren't so available and people can't always travel to attend groups."

Balance Whanganui is a peer support organisation which focuses on hope, recovery and wellbeing by providing support, education and training to people affected by mental health and addiction issues in the Whanganui District Health Board region.

Stress
Weather events Compliance costs
Relationship breakups Drought
Financial pressure
Isolation Reduced pay outs
Health issues

And although depression is generally more common for women (with one in five women diagnosed compared to one in eight men), rural men have a higher rate of depression than their urban counterparts.

A couple of recent campaigns are addressing these sobering statistics by making rural health and wellbeing a priority. Federated Farmers, with support from the Dairy Women's Network, DairyNZ, Rural Women New Zealand, Ministry of Health, New Zealand Institute of Rural Health, AgResearch, Vodafone, Beef and Lamb and Farmsafe have produced a wallet-sized card (pictured above) of support services available to rural people when they feel under pressure.

Another campaign, www.depression.org.nz/ruralhealth, run by the National Depression Initiative features former All Black and mental health campaigner John Kirwan talking to rural people who have struggled with and overcome depression and other mental illness.

Kirwan, who suffered from depression during his rugby career, wrote the following in his 2010 book *All Blacks Don't Cry*: "You don't tell someone who's mentally ill or struggling, who's having a low time in their lives, to harden up, because it doesn't work."

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- Summer fire report



Sharing experiences...

(Continued from cover page)

Balance runs activities, support groups, education courses, workshops and advocacy services from its office in Whanganui, as well as a support group in Marton. Linda also works one-on-one with people in Taihape and Raetihi but wants to extend her role into other rural areas of the district and is keen to hear from people who need support.

Despite financial stress and isolation, Linda says she finds the issues which affect rural people are similar to those faced by people living in urban areas.

“It’s life circumstances that seem to affect people’s mental health, regardless of where they are living.”

She says companionship and comradeship are important factors in maintaining wellbeing, especially in rural areas and mindfulness is a tool she is being asked to share more and more.

“Mindfulness has been found very effective in reducing distress. To be mindful a person focuses on what is happening in the moment, usually while using breathing techniques, and accepts their overwhelming thoughts and feelings, allowing them just to be, breathing through them with compassion and kindness. People can also focus on music or nature in order to be in the moment. Using mindfulness, along with other tools for wellbeing and other stress reduction techniques, as well as using our own strengths, enhances the journey to wellness.”

When asked for advice about what to do when someone is feeling persistently low Linda says it’s different for different people.

“Usually I’d say connect with someone you trust who is going to be supportive. They could be a clinical person, like a doctor or psychologist, or a friend or family member, as long as they are not judgemental.”

Peer support workers at Balance have their own experience of mental health or addiction and often share their own experiences with the people they are working with.



Linda from Balance Whanganui

“It takes a while for people to get to know me and I spend time getting to know them. We are peer support workers who have had our own experiences so we give each other hope.”

Other support services

- Balance Whanganui: www.balancewhanganui.org.nz, 345 4488, 021 262 8370 or info@balancewhanganui.org.nz
- National Depression Initiative: www.depression.org.nz (includes ‘The Journal’, a free online programme which includes strategies to reduce depression)
- Federated Farmers: <http://tinyurl.com/mlnzlne> or 0800 327 646 (copies of the ‘Life’s a bitch’ cards are available by calling this number)
- Whanganui District Health Board Community Mental Health Service: 348 1207 (or you can also make a self-referral, get a referral through your GP, other support agencies or through Taihape Health Centre or Marton Health Centre)
- Kaupapa Maori Mental Health and Addictions Service Te Puke Karanga Hauora (Raetihi): 06 385 5019 or gj@gpotaka.com
- Ngati Rangi Community Health Centre – Kaupapa Maori Mental Health and Addition Services (Ohakune) 06 385 9580 or annie.neho@ngatitangihealth.org.nz
- Ruapehu-Whanganui Support Trust: 0800 787 254 or <http://ruapehu-whanganui.rural-support.org.nz> to fill out an online contact form (free and confidential advice)
- The Low Down: www.thelowdown.co.nz (helping youth with depression)
- Mental Health Foundation: www.mentalhealth.org.nz
- Like Minds Like Mine: www.likeminds.org.nz (a campaign to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness)
- Supporting Families in Mental Illness Wanganui 345 3301
- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 0508 828 865
- Youthline: 0800 376 633
- Alcohol and Drug helpline: 0800 787 797
- Hinengaro Hauora Kaupapa Maori Mental Health and Addictions Service – Te Oranganui Iwi Health Authority 349 0007
- Kia Piki Te Ora (all age Maori suicide prevention co-ordinators) Nga Tai O Te Awa: 348 9902 or 027 2439713
- Pathways Wanganui: www.pathways.co.nz or 348 8198 (creating mental health and wellness opportunities that enable people to live their dreams and flourish)

Pay your rates online

To make life easier, you can now pay your rates online. Visit www.wanganui.govt.nz, click on ‘Pay It’ on the right-hand-side menu and then click on ‘Pay rates online’. You will need your email address as well as your property and notice numbers, which can be found on your rates invoice.

You can also use the Council website to register your dog, pay for parking infringements and obtain a stock grazing permit (no charge), with other services to be added in the future.

The fourth instalment of rates is due on Wednesday, 27 May 2015.



Summer fire report



Board Chair Alan Taylor reports on ways to keep firefighting costs to a minimum and how to be responsible when lighting fires.

The past summer was again subject to fire restrictions in the Wanganui District. The restrictions are not lightly imposed, but follow a set of measures considered by the New Zealand Fire Service to assess fire risk. Likewise, they are not lifted until the criteria describing the risk are no longer met.

The Fire Service is well aware of the necessity for farmers to use fire as a management tool and they sympathise with the frustration that their rulings sometimes cause. The Fire Service alleviates our frustration as best they can by issuing special permits which allow fires to be lit under a set of strict guidelines.

The Wanganui Rural Community Board is in continual contact with the Fire Service over our district's fire status and these permits. We are informed immediately when these permits are either revoked or are no longer issued, and when the risk becomes severe enough for the fire status to move to a total fire ban.

Rural residents can help manage fire risk and fire attendance costs by removing combustible materials which might be lying around during very dry periods and taking a calm approach to reporting any fire they see.

In spite of permit holders informing the Fire Service of the location and time of a fire they wish to set, the Service must attend any fire reported. If you notice a fire, look out for signs of intentional and attended fires (such as controlled grain stubble burning) before you inform the Fire Service.

One unnecessary call last summer, associated with a total misrepresentation of the fire's extent, resulted in a costly call-out that disrupted a legitimate training exercise underway by the Fire Service. Please don't fabricate stories about fires that waste the Service's time and resources!

Remember that while it is always better to be safe rather than sorry, your rural fire personnel are volunteers who give their time and energy to sometimes dangerous situations. Their associated attendance costs can be an unnecessary Council expense.

The Rural Fire Service is continually searching for new fire fighters. If you would like to serve your community through this means please contact the Whanganui Fire Service, phone 348 0183 or Wanganui District Council Emergency Manager Matthew Smith, phone 349 0515.



The Rural Fire Service at training in Aramoho, Wanganui

Feral goat control



Following reports of damage made to native bush and crops in our district by feral goats, the Wanganui Rural Community Board discussed the issue at its February meeting. Board Member Bill Ashworth reports.

Ian Moore, a land use and forestry consultant who advises the Wanganui District Council, was invited to our February meeting to present a report on feral goat control.

The report stated that feral goats can be found throughout the whole Wanganui District, from the native bush hinterland to coastal sand country. They are known to move from one property to another, eating pasture and native bush and often breeding with domestic goat stock. They are controlled by the Department of Conservation in national parks (at a cost) but otherwise uncontrolled by our regional council (although



in some parts of New Zealand, goats are eradicated by regional councils when found on protected reserves such as wetlands).

There is no confirmed number of goats in our district but, to give an example of

how prolific they are, about 500 goats are shot annually in Waitahinga Reserve and more than 7000 have been shot on a forest site at Taunoka.

Mr Moore talked about balancing the economic advantage of reducing feral goats with environmental concerns, saying that it would be "totally impractical to put into effect an eradication programme without a long term objective that saw physical and economic benefit to the community at large".

The economic benefits he talks about include taming goats for cheese and milk products.

The idea of lobbying Horizons Regional Council to declare feral goats a 'pest of regional significance' was also floated although some members suggested goat control was up to individual farmers and didn't want to see a publicly funded campaign which would increase Horizons' rates.

So what's our next step? We have decided to meet with the Department of Conservation, Federated Farmers, Iwi and forest companies to look at a way we can work together to investigate goat control in our district.

Horizons Regional Council will also be reviewing its Pest Animal Management Strategy shortly and you are welcome to make a submission. Visit www.horizons.govt.nz or email barry.gilliland@horizons.govt.nz for more information.



Democracy is served!

Board Chair Alan Taylor reports on how the Wanganui District Council Proposed Plan Change 36 prompted submissions on both sides of the coin on the subdivision of class 1 and class 2 land.

Democracy really has been served as Wanganui District Council considers changes to its District Plan, and especially so with proposed changes to the 'Rural Zones' section.

Proposed Plan Change 36 (PPC 36) contained the most controversial propositions thus far covered in the District Plan review. These changes (among others) propose to alter the rules around rural subdivision of some of our land.

It was fruitful to witness a large number of submissions to PPC 36, as this shows there is a real interest in what happens in our rural area. Most of the 80 submissions took one of two rather polarised stances. Either they supported the continued right to subdivide our very best soils, or they supported the proposed changes to limit this.

The arguments for retaining the current rules were generally around the fact that continued subdivision protects the investment people make when they purchase small blocks of land, and that such small blocks would attract new people to Whanganui for 'lifestyle' living.

The argument for restricting subdivision weighed in on preventing further loss of our best soils from productive enterprise. The Wanganui Rural Community Board supported the latter.

Our case rested on the requirements of the Resource Management Act (1991), which was created to sustain the potential of our natural and physical resources to meet the needs of future generations.

The Board argued that the lynchpin of Whanganui's future is its agricultural potential and the current 'ad hoc' subdivision of our best land, if allowed to continue, would destroy this. We also argued that our District Plan should be more about how we provide for our children and grandchildren to prosper rather than the immediate desires or short-term expectations of our generation.

There are other proposed changes that affect a wide range of interested parties (for example, Transpower and the New Zealand Transport Authority) and also changes that affect local landowners pertaining, for example, to trees on boundaries. These were also submitted on, but to a lesser extent.

The task of the hearings panel is without envy as they will have to make decisions which are controversial. It is impossible to please all sides. The panel will present their decisions to the Council shortly to ask for approval of the decisions. The appeals process is likely to continue through the remainder of the year after which changes come into effect.

My final comment is that it is critical to view the outcome of this plan phase in the context of the whole District Plan, especially the Residential/Lifestyle Zone, as the intentions of any part of the Plan dovetail into and support the others.

Submissions to Proposed Plan Change 36 can be found on www.wanganui.govt.nz/shapingwanganui.

Want to talk about rural issues?

The Wanganui Rural Community Board represents the interests of our rural sector within the community and at the Wanganui District Council table. The Board members invite you to contact them to discuss matters affecting the rural community.

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