

Ask in Earnest



**Candid and Compassionate Conversations about Suicide
for the Farm and Ranch Community**

Farm and Ranch Conference
Idaho Department of Agriculture
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Candid and Compassionate Conversations



- I. What We Know about Farming and Suicide
- II. Risk Factors
- III. Suicide Myths
- IV. Action Steps to Save Lives
- V. Q&A



What We Know

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report
 - 2016
 - 2020
- Rural v. urban suicide rate
- Suicide increase 1999-2019
 - 2021-2022
 - Idaho ranks 5th in nation
- Age Matters
- Wasn't it worse in the 1980's?
- One every day and every 11 minutes



What We Know

- Not only America's Farmers:
 - Australia
 - United Kingdom
 - France
 - India
- One suicide impacts 147; possibly even more in rural communities
- Let's take action now to save lives

Risk Factors

- **The Agrarian Imperative**

Like many animal species, humans have a basic need to acquire sufficient territory and the necessary resources (e.g., capital, equipment, buildings, livestock) to produce the food and shelter required by their families and communities. Also called “the agrarian imperative”, this genetically programmed instinct drives farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. **The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to tolerate unusual pain and adversity, to trust their own judgment, and to take uncommon risks.**

Rossmann, MR (2010). The Agrarian Imperative Journal of Agromedicine 16 71-75

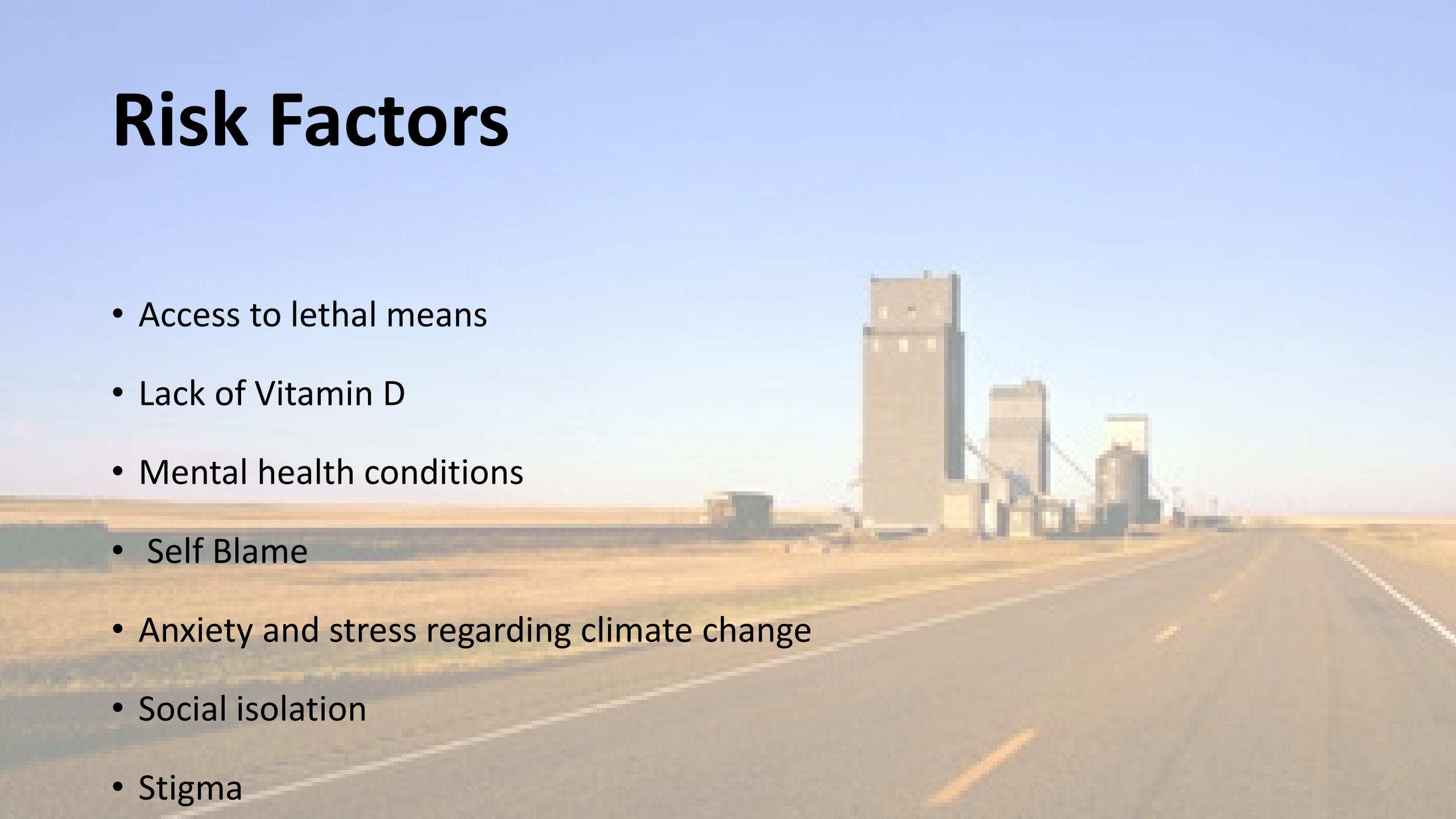
Risk Factors

- Work/life balance
- Economics
- Language/culture of farming
- Exposure to pesticides/farm chemicals/grain dust
- Lack of/reluctance to seek mental health services
- Alcohol use as a coping strategy



Risk Factors

- Access to lethal means
- Lack of Vitamin D
- Mental health conditions
- Self Blame
- Anxiety and stress regarding climate change
- Social isolation
- Stigma



Myths about Suicide

- Most suicides happen without warning
- People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out
- Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal
- Talking about it causes it
- Strong people don't kill themselves

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Learn warning signs**

- Up to 80% will display warning signs often missed

- **Words**

- The Big 3:
 - Burden
 - Loss of hope
 - Don't see a future for themselves

- **Mood**

- Depressed
- Sudden improvement

- **Actions**

- Acquiring access to lethal means
- Anger; expression of anger
- Withdrawal

Most agrarian people know how to work hard, but less about managing behavior and relationships—it's not in agricultural curricula (Rossman 2019)

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Ask in Earnest**
 - **SEE** from the 30,000 foot view
 - **LISTEN** a little differently
 - **ASK** the hard questions
 - Strong & vulnerable are not opposites
 - Direct
 - *How* you ask can make a difference
 - Plans/details

Action Steps to Save Lives

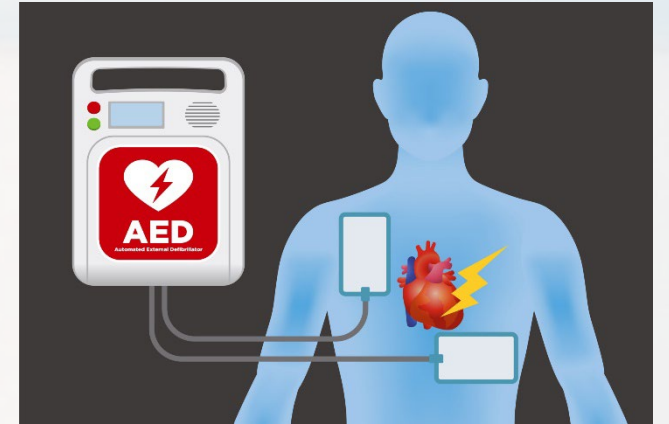
- Restrict access to lethal means
 - Put **TIME** and **DISTANCE** between **suicidal thoughts** and **actions**
 - In Idaho, 3 out of 5 suicides involve a firearm
 - This is NOT about gun control, this is about saving lives
- Share your concerns
 - Too serious to take on by yourself

Action Steps to Save Lives

- **CALL** 988
- **TEXT** “Go” or “Start” or “Help” to 988
- **Chat** online **988lifeline.org**
- **GO** to your local emergency room
- **HELP** them connect and **STAY** with the one you care about
- **When you ask the question, you are DOING suicide prevention!**

Action Steps to Save Lives

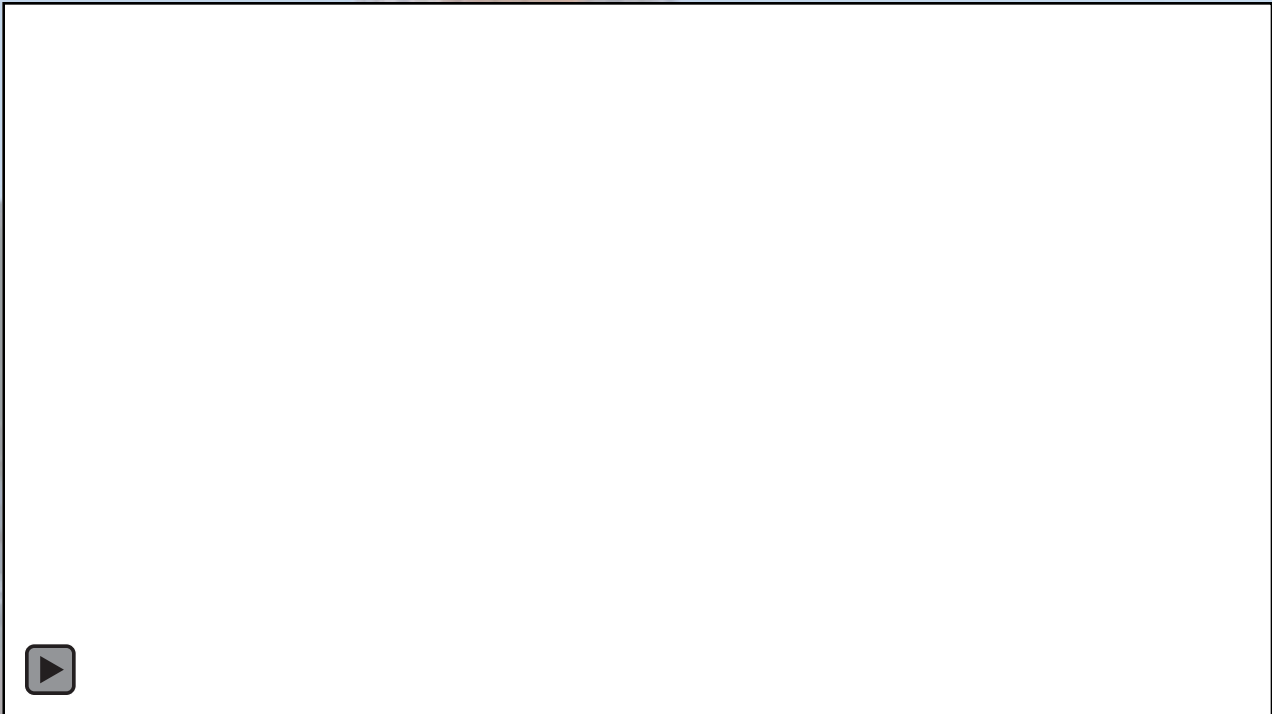
- Gatekeeper training i.e.,
Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
QPR is like CPR for suicide
- Let's make it normal to get trained in QPR
- No one says, "I can't do CPR because I'm not a doctor."
Don't let stigma get in the way of saving a life
- Access trainings:
 - County health department
 - County extension office
 - Who in your community can champion these efforts?



Action Steps to Save Lives



Action Steps to Save Lives



Action Steps to Save Lives

A Team Approach

- The people on your checklist:
 - Friends and family
 - Healthcare provider
 - Mental health provider
 - Clergy
 - Other supports, i.e., vet, banker, pharmacist, farm organizations
- Listen and learn from others:
**Challenge stigma
and commonly held beliefs**



"It's Okay To Cry On The Farm"

Listen to this episode from Cutting Fences Podcast on Spotify. On this episode I interview...

Action Steps to Save Lives-- Farmers Take Care of One Another

Tap into who we are

- **“It’s in our nature to care. We are caretakers of the land, animals, and the community. If someone is experiencing a mental health condition, of course we should want to help.”**
- **“Because that’s in our nature.”**
- **“That’s who we are.”**

I am here for you!



Action Steps to Save Lives

Working Towards BALANCE

- **Meet people where they are at**
 - Improve/protect mental health on a daily basis on the farm
 - Important steps in effectively addressing mental health
 - **Help combat depression**
 - **Sleep**
 - **Nutrition**
 - **Exercise**
 - **Stress Management**
 - **Gratitude**
- 

Next Steps for Ask In Earnest

- Continuing to educate and advocate for farmer and rancher health and well-being
- Bring workbook project to life
- Currently certified as a QPR Facilitator; earn Mental Health First Aid Instructor status
- Listen to farmers and help build what is most helpful



Action Steps to Save Lives

- **Resources**

- [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)
- American Farm Bureau [State of Mind](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [National Centre for Farmer Health](#)—Australia
- [MT State University](#) Ag Producer Stress Assistance Clearinghouse
- [Ag Behavioral Health](#)
- [Ask in Earnest](#)

- [Farm Aid Call Center](#) 1-800-FARM-AID (6:00 AM-7:00 PM Western time)

Questions & Comments



- *Ask in Earnest*, and you may save a life
- www.askinearnest.org
- askinearnest@hotmail.com
- @AskInEarnest18 X/Twitter handle
- Facebook, LinkedIn
- *Thank You!*

