Mental Health in Rural Colorado
The Alarming Rise of Farmer Suicide

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A Growing Crisis

- Suicide rates among Coloradans continue to rise.

- Rural Coloradans are at even higher risk: 27.1 rural vs. 22.1 non-rural deaths by suicide per 100,000.

- A recent study from the CDC found that rural counties in the U.S. had the highest rates of suicide in the country and that farmers are among the most likely to die by suicide compared with other occupations.

- In southwest Colorado, the suicide rate is 31.8 per 100,000 residents.
Why Is This Happening?

• In the last 5 years, net income for farmers has dropped by more than 50% (USDA)

• International trade tariffs and constant shifts in weather strongly influence the financial success/failure of farmers in Colorado.

• A strong majority of farmers and farmworkers say financial issues, farm or business problems and fear of losing the farm impact farmers’ mental health, according to research funded by American Farm Bureau.
Lack of Resources in Rural Colorado

- One provider per 6,000 rural residents.

- 12 Colorado counties have neither a licensed psychologist or social worker.

- 22 rural counties don’t have a licensed psychologist, and 24 counties do not have a licensed addiction counselor.

- 11 counties in Colorado have no hospital at all, let alone any mental health beds.
How the Colorado Department of Ag is Helping

The Colorado Department of Agriculture exists to **support** the state's agriculture industry and serve the people of Colorado through regulation, **advocacy** and education.
Partnersing with Colorado Crisis Services

• First collaborations began three years ago in response to this growing crisis.

• CDA and industry partners created a training video for call center operators - educating them on unique issues faced by those in rural communities.

• CDA began promoting the line at targeted events like the Stock Show, at sale barns, state fair and industry conferences.
Encouraging Results

• We’ve seen tremendous community and media support of this initiative. The hotline has been promoted in stories, interviews and donated space in dozens of media outlets.

• The crisis hotline had seen a 15% increase in the number of calls and texts from Colorado’s rural areas in its first roughly 18 months, and rural mental health agencies are reaching out for ag-specific materials.

• Some counties tell us that this is the first time they’ve seen mental health crisis efforts directed toward their communities - and other states like have reached out for guidance in creating their own programs.
Increasing Outreach

- CoBank gift led to our ability to create a new documentary-style video, PSAs, web banners, wallet cards, posters, new online resource site and more.

- Partnership with CDHS and CDPHE is allowing us to continue building out this initiative.

- Official launch will be May 20 at 3:30pm via a Facebook Live event and special 9News Facebook event May 21 at 11am.
Sneak Peek!

If you need to talk, please call 844-493-TALK or text TALK to 38255.
Thank you!