



‘Well Aware’

Mental Health Awareness session for the farming community delivered by Rural Support in Northern Ireland.

Background

It’s widely acknowledged that farming can be a stressful occupation and there is increasing concern about how levels of stress and anxiety are impacting farmers. Though attitudes are slowly changing, the issue of mental health remains be a taboo topic for many. This in turn can hinder people’s willingness to speak about the issue and to take steps to appropriately support themselves or seek the help they need.

What is ‘Well Aware’?

‘Well Aware’ is an interactive, educational workshop designed to support awareness of mental health and wellbeing within agriculture and horticulture. It is aimed at the farming community in general and particularly at those in allied industries within the wider farming supply chain. The workshop aims to equip participants with essential knowledge and practical skills to help them:

- Improve their general awareness of stress and mental wellbeing and understanding of factors that influence this;
- Learn how to recognise the signs in oneself or others who may be struggling with their mental wellbeing;
- Develop the ability to listen and the confidence to engage supportively with somebody experiencing difficulty;
- Improve their knowledge of sources of help available to the farming community and how to signpost people towards these;

Format

Well Aware is structured to be delivered over 2 hours. The workshop is educational, led by a facilitator, with content delivered through a mix of simple presentation, open discussion and interactive group exercises. Sections cover:

- Understanding Mental Health & Wellbeing (What we mean by Mental health, factors affecting our wellbeing, understanding the unique stresses of farming);
- Spotting the signals of distress (Common signs of mental health difficulty; suicidal behaviour);
- Supporting and engaging with those in distress (‘Active Listening’; considerations & principles when supporting people; What’s helpful and what is not)
- Signposting (Sources of help & support and how to access them)

Session developed by Aarun Naik – Psychotherapist and counsellor based in Liverpool