

Tackling healthcare challenges in farming communities

Why the farming community?

North Yorkshire is one of the most rural counties in England.

79% of its land is used for farming.

Farmers face unique health challenges and often delay seeking help, leading to poorer health.

What we did:

We wanted to understand the health and wellbeing issues affecting the farming community, the barriers stopping them from seeking help and solutions.

Who we heard from:

220 people shared their views and experiences with us.



Key health issues for farmers:

74% had back, joint, knee, shoulder, or muscle pain.

42% had stress and anxiety.

31% had sleep problems.



What stops farmers seeking help when unwell?

Lack of time

36% say farm work stops them prioritising their health.



"It is all encompassing; farming isn't 'just a job'."

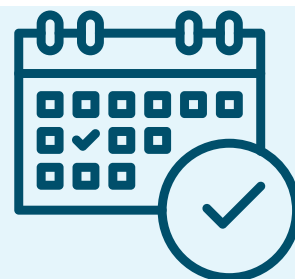
Financial pressures

Time off equals lost income, and hiring staff to cover is costly.



Unpredictability of farming work

40% say booking & attending health appointments is too hard around their farming work.



Rural access issues

Distance, limited transport, poor internet and phone signal.



Losing gun license fears

Worry that sharing mental health issues may lead to their licenses being taken off them.



What stops farmers seeking help when unwell?

Lack of awareness about available services and limited health knowledge

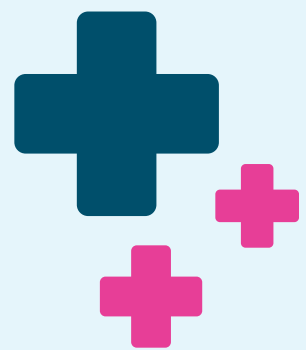
"I'm unsure of the services available beyond the GP network and NHS."



Stigma around asking for help

28% feel their issues aren't "serious enough" to get help.

"You don't admit weakness, especially if it's mental health weakness."



Not feeling understood

Farmers feel health staff don't understand the farming way of life and its pressures.



Health takes a backseat

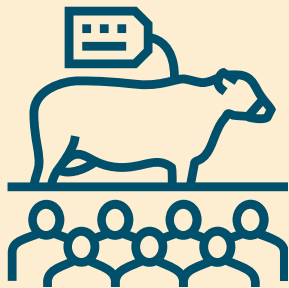
The farm comes before health.

"There is nothing wrong – until we can't get out of bed in the morning."



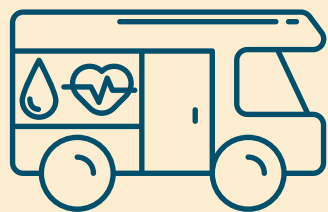
What would help farmers seek help when unwell?

Bringing services to the farming community



57% would like drop-in clinics at auction marts where no appointment is needed.

"Farmers won't make the time to go to the doctors, but it would help if the nurses came to them."



36% said mobile health checks in local villages and towns would be helpful.

"Mobile services with drop-in and mobile blood pressure and blood tests 'get us when we're there'."

Ongoing support in the community

In-person health support in rural areas to help encourage farmers to put their health first.



Reassure farmers that support is confidential

Utilising trusted staff for signposting

Train rural professionals (such as vets) to signpost farmers to health and wellbeing support.



What would help farmers seek help when unwell?

Improving communications and awareness

Better promotion of health services at auction marts, community hubs and pubs.

“There are lots of farmers who don’t realise how much help is out there.”



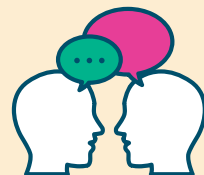
46%

said more flexible appointment times would help.



Use farmer-friendly language

When speaking with farmers about healthcare.



Improving accessibility

Farmers would like to see walk-in clinics at GP practices for the farming community.



50%

said training health staff to understand the farming way of life would encourage more farmers to have the confidence to seek help.

