



Enterprising Rural Families™

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TIP OF THE MONTH:

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS

- Monitor your work hours: 1st sign that things are out of hand is working too many hours. Set a limit and stick to it.
- Recognize your signs of stress—tell someone else what they are and ask them to watch for them. Every two weeks write down how you're doing.
- Get a mentor or coach—a supervisor, friend, working partner.
- Learn to delegate—give others responsibility and authority. You maintain accountability, but let them decide how to get it done.
- Communicate as much as you can. Be completely honest with at least one person. Hold regular staff meetings—don't wait until there's a problem. Share positive things as well as deal with issues.
- Recognize what's important over what's urgent. Fix the system, not the problem. Find the issues behind the crises and problems and deal with them on a long-term basis.
- Recognize accomplishments. We tend to be a society of problem-solvers and expect our employees to be too. Take time to congratulate yourself and those around you on large and small victories.

Farming and Ranching with Family Members

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You may have heard the old saying that you can tell which farmers¹ are related because they are the ones who aren't speaking to each other. Farming with family can have its problems, but it doesn't have to end up this way.

We consider it a great privilege to have our son and daughter-in-law in partnership with us. We are very proud of them. We think it is important that they make the decisions and keep up with the new technology.



While farming with family has many rewards, there can also be hazards. Separating business issues from family issues is not always easy. Business disagreements can turn into family problems, with members often caught in the middle.

Farming with family

A seminal study of two-generation family farms was conducted by the authors to determine 1) The major challenges encountered in farming with family, and 2) How family members coped with these challenges. Respondents were asked to rank potential stressful situations in two-generation farm families. Table 1 shows the overall top 10 ranking and ranking by generation for these stresses.

Table 1. Rankings of stressors in two-generation farm families

Overall Rank	Stressor	Rank for 1 st generation	Rank for 2 nd generation
1.	Living with tight money	1	1
2.	Farm taking priority over family	2	3
3.	Poor teamwork	3	4
4.	Differing time priorities	4	5
5.	Not involved in family decisions	5	6
6.	Not being on our own	18	2
7.	Willing to take more risks	6	13
8.	Disagreements over spending priorities	7	9
9.	Being criticized by family members	8	11
10.	Feeling like hired labor	10	7



As seen in the table, the rankings are sometimes different when the older and younger generations are examined separately. The results highlight some of the key issues that families have to deal with:

- Some members of the operation may feel they are not part of the management team;
- There may be concerns over team work and who is absorbing the major risks;
- Too much family contact can be problematic. Where does one separate family matters from business matters?
- The priority of farm over home can be a source of stress. The generations may disagree over how much time to commit to the business and to the family.

Coping with stress

How do farm families deal with these difficult issues? Table 2 shows the most frequent ways family members in this study reported dealing with living in a two-generation farm operation.

Rank	Coping Strategies
1.	Rely on spiritual beliefs
2.	Encouraging each other
3.	Staying flexible when stress and conflict arise
4.	Analyze the situation before reacting
5.	Practice relaxation techniques
6.	Participate in diversionary activities
7.	Accept the things we can't change
8.	Engage in exercise or physical activity
9.	Talk with other families in similar situations
10.	Talk with relatives not in the farm operation

The results show that farm families use a variety of techniques to cope with the stresses involved in two-generations farming together.

Keeping peace on the farm

Keeping the family farm running smoothly is not a simple task. Many people are involved; each with their own ideas and desires. It takes strong commitment, continual hard work, and a good sense of humor. Some points that respondents in this study said helped keep peace on their family farm:



- √ Communicate. *Good communication requires two things—a mutual respect for the other person's opinion and the ability to listen objectively;*
- √ Compromise. *The son or daughter should not always have to give in to dad's wishes, nor dad always give in to his son's or daughter's demands;*
- √ Allow mistakes. *Everyone will make mistakes now and then. That's how we learn. If you must criticize, criticize the behavior and not the person;*
- √ Provide motivation. *If a son or daughter feels like just a hired hand, there is nothing to motivate him or her.*
- √ Keep lifestyles out of the farm business. *The key to success in operating a family farm is to keep personal lifestyles out of the farm operation itself. Separate the business from social life.*
- √ Get it in writing. *A written agreement won't work magic, but it will help solve some of the issues in two-generations farming together.*
- √ Keep everyone informed. *It is important to keep all member of the farm family informed, both those active in the farm and those not actively involved.*

The two-generation farm operation is a special system. It includes the blending of work and family roles, generational value differences, and daily interactions. The success and satisfaction of farming and ranching with family members is determined by how the members handle these challenges in this special system.

¹Farmers is the generic term used in this article. The concepts expressed are also relevant for ranching families.

References:

Stress, Coping, and Satisfaction: Generational Differences in Farm Families, by Randy R. Weigel; Daniel J. Weigel; Joan Blundall. Family Relations © 1987 National Council on Family Relations.

KEEPING THE RANCH IN THE FAMILY—Happily

1. Remember, team work is the key to success.
2. Keep family life separate from business.
3. Stay flexible. Be able to compromise.
4. Practice relaxation techniques.
5. Participate in diversionary activities.
6. Communicate with families in similar situations.
7. Communicate with one another!
8. Provide motivation.
9. Keep lifestyles out of the farm/ranch business.
10. Keep all members of the farm family informed.



In order to be successful and profitable, a family ran farm or ranch must adhere to certain guidelines.



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