

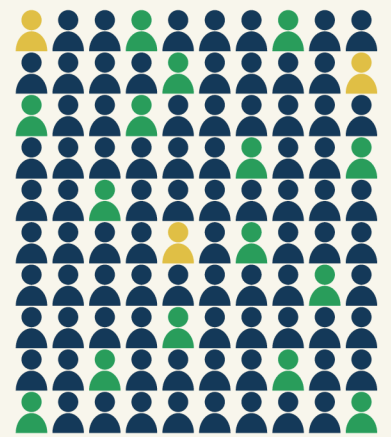
Winter blues in agriculture

Winter in Canadian agriculture often means long days in the barn, fewer daylight hours and more time spent inside catching up on tasks. While the season brings its own routines and rewards, it can also bring feelings such as low energy, irritability and low mood. A common term for this experience is the “winter blues”, a period of general discomfort characterized by the changes mentioned above.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) symptoms are more severe and persistent and can affect our ability to function in day-to-day life.

Distinguishing between winter blues and seasonal affective disorder

- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), or depression with seasonal patterns, is a condition that typically appears in the fall and fades away in the spring/summer. Compared to winter blues, SAD consists of more severe symptoms that persists over 2 weeks.
- It is believed that people with SAD make up approximately 10% of all depression cases. Adults between 18-50 years of age, women, individuals living in northern regions and people with a history of depression are more likely to experience SAD.



2-3% of Canadians will experience SAD
15% will experience winter blues

What are the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

- Trouble sleeping
- Low energy or feeling sluggish
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in activities, or hobbies
- Change in appetite
- Thoughts of suicide

Signs of SAD and depression are similar, however SAD signs tend to appear and subside around the same time each year.

Tips to manage SAD or winter blues:



Incorporate movement into your daily farm routine this winter. Tasks like tending livestock, organizing supplies and walking through the barn can enhance energy, reduce stress and strengthen mental well-being.



Maintain social interactions with friends, family and neighbours. Get involved in your local 4-H association, church or fair board. These interactions can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.



Increase exposure to natural light. Research has found benefits from exposure to sunlight within one hour of waking up in the morning, particularly for people with SAD. This can also be done with artificial light therapy using a special UV lamp for 30 minutes.



Seeking Support

Farmer Wellness Initiative 1-866-267-6255 - Offers Ontario farmers, farm workers and their families unlimited mental health counselling 24/7, addressing the unique challenges of agriculture. www.farmerwellnessinitiative.ca

ConnexOntario - Mental Health & Addiction Treatment Services 1-866-531-2600 - A database of Ontario mental health, addictions and problem gambling services to access support local to you. Whether for yourself, a loved one or a client, their confidential services are available 24/7. www.connexontario.ca

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline - Call or Text 988 - When you reach out, a trained responder will listen without judgement, provide support and understanding and can tell you about resources that will help. www.988.ca