

Dear friends,

It is with incredible sadness that we at Heartland Vets share the news of the passing of one of our veterinarians, Dr. Tom Gutteridge. He was known for his vast knowledge of all things (not just veterinary related!), his witty humour, bright smile, beautiful way with words and the warmest hug you could ever imagine. Tom lost his valiant struggle with addiction and mental health on August 4, 2020. We are going to miss our dear friend immensely and we know our clients and community will too. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.



Mental Health in Agriculture

I want to take a moment to start a conversation about mental health. As some of you may have heard, we lost a colleague on August 4th to mental health and addiction. Dr Tom Gutteridge was a caring, intelligent and well-educated man who suffered greatly internally. To many, the cause of his death would be a shock as he hid his condition very well. Let his silent battle be not in vain. Let's seriously talk about mental health in agriculture.

Having good mental health is more than just being happy and not suffering from an illness. It is a state of well being where you can enjoy your life along with your friends and family. It also includes resiliency, which is the ability to deal with difficult situations life may put in your path. 1 in 5 Canadians will suffer from a mental health episode throughout their life, be it in childhood all the way up into adulthood. It can be short lived, or be a longer episode. Biological factors, history of family mental illnesses or life experiences such as trauma can play a role in your mental health. It can present itself in various ways: it changes the way we think and perceive the world, our emotional state can be altered, it can disrupt our work and the way we interact with our environment and the people and animals in it. The two most common illnesses are depression and anxiety.

Agriculture has its own challenges that make it more likely for farmers to suffer from mental illness. Producers are more likely than the general population to suffer from it. A survey conducted by the University of Guelph in 2015-2016 found that

- 40% of producers were uneasy about seeking medical help due to what others might think
- 35% of producers met the criteria for depression
- 45% of producers were classified as high stress
- 58% of producers met the criteria for anxiety
- 67% of producers scored lower than the general population in terms of resiliency
- Producers were at high risk of burnout, high emotional exhaustion, high cynicism, and low professional efficacy

There are various factors that play a role in the increase in mental health disorders in the agriculture industry such as: working long hours (often alone), being at the mercy of the weather and other uncontrollable factors, and dealing with public misconceptions and animal activists as to what occurs on a farm and why. But to complicate this more, this year we also have to deal with the pandemic and all the uncertainties it has brought, including more market variabilities but also the complications that it has brought for families with children going to school.

Early signs of mental illness can include:

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| • Abnormal sleeping routine | • Inability to perform daily tasks | • Persistent thoughts or memories |
| • Pulling away from people | • Smoking, drinking, drugs more than usual | • Hearing voices |
| • Low energy | • Hopelessness | • Harming yourself or others |
| • Numbness | • Yelling or fighting | • Unusual feelings: angry, confused, forgetful, on edge, upset, worried or scared |
| • Aches and pains | • Severe mood swings | |



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The difficulty with mental health is that it is an invisible disease. But, the more that we talk about it, the more that we can dispel the myth that having a mental health disorder is a weakness. There is no shame in seeking help when it is needed. When we break a limb, we don't think twice about going to the doctors to have it treated. So, let us all set aside both our judgment and our shame so that none of us have to suffer in silence. There is often a lack of resources available for treatment, and it can be difficult to find resources. Here are some resources that can be utilized should you need them.

- Canadian Mental Health Association
 - 24/7 crisis line 1-866-531-2600
 - Chat online, email additional resources: www.connexontario.ca
- Ontario 211
 - Province-wide crisis line, will connect you to mental health services in your communities
 - 2-1-1
- Distress and Crisis Lines available in Ontario by region, 24/7
 - Grey-Bruce: 1-877-470-5200
 - Huron Perth: 1-888-829-7484
 - Wellington and Dufferin Counties: 1-888-821-3760
- Do More Ag
 - Has a list of counsellors available by region that have a background in agriculture
 - www.domore.ag/resources
- Your family doctor can also get you in touch with the resources you need

Some of our staff have mental health first aid training, and if it becomes available again, I would encourage you to take the training. It might just save a life.

Not every condition requires medication, sometimes just taking the time to listen can lighten the load of the one that is suffering. If anyone ever needs to chat, know that I am willing to listen. I encourage you to check in with your family, friends and neighbours and start a discussion today about mental health. But also check in with yourself and practice some self-care, we are our own worst critic after all.

Rest in Peace Tom.

Be kind and be well,
Elisabeth Begley DVM



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Holiday Office Hours

Our staff has been dedicated to continuing to provide service and care to our clients and their pets/animals. In an effort to show our appreciation and to give our staff a much-deserved break and opportunity to recharge, we will be closing our offices on the Saturday of the next 2 public holiday weekends. The Saturday's that will be affected will be the Labour Day (Saturday September 5), and Thanksgiving (Saturday October 10). As always, we will continue to provide 24-hour emergency services for our clients. In the event of an emergency please contact us at 1-800-565-2047. The fee schedule will remain unchanged. On behalf of the partners and staff at Heartland Animal Hospital & Veterinary Services, we would like to thank you for your business and continued support.

Veterinary Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Much has changed with the alarming presence of the COVID-19 virus in Ontario. During this time, it is important that we maintain a safe food supply. Our veterinarians will continue to play a role in animal health, welfare, and food safety. At the time of this writing, we are still providing herd health and emergency service. In response to the pandemic, our clinic is taking many precautions to ensure everyone's safety. We care very much about the health and wellbeing of our clients, staff, families and community. Below are some of the changes we have implemented. Please be aware that as this pandemic develops, we may have to adjust our procedures in response.

Veterinary farm visits

- Once on farm, we will be wearing gloves during the visit and try to maintain a distance from people of at least six feet wherever practically possible
- Care will be taken to wash and disinfect hands and contacted tools and equipment before re-entering our vehicle

Technician farm visits

- Techs will continue to assist veterinarians as necessary. The same precautions as above will apply
- Technicians will continue to provide services, such as dehorning, but we ask that no farm personnel are in the immediate vicinity during their visit

Clinic procedures

- Our clinic will remain open, but business hours may be subject to change
- Clients will be met at the door by one of our customer care representatives
- Purchases will be set out at the door
- Laboratory samples will be received at the door

We thank you for assistance in helping us continue to provide veterinary care while considering the health of yourselves and our staff.

Stay healthy!