



# LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

New bimonthly column aims to provide tools to reduce stigma at work

There has been a lot of discussion lately on mental health needs in the agricultural community, which is becoming an increasingly growing concern. You may recall our cover story in the May issue on tackling mental health stigma in the dairy farming community and ways to get producers and their families to openly talk about it and seek help.

Not only do dairy producers have to deal with internal pressures from family issues to succession planning, they also have external pressures, such as weather, physical demands of the job and making sure they comply with various regulations. Yet producers are also running a business, which for most means having to manage full- and part-time employees, and providing a healthy and structured work environment.

To help producers better manage a healthy workplace on their farms, *Milk Producer* has partnered with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services to introduce a new column on mental health. The bimonthly section will feature best practices and tips for fostering a healthy workplace, while reducing lost productivity, absenteeism and turnover. The column's goal is to provide information for farm owners and managers who are looking to better help their employees address mental health issues at work. In this issue's introductory column, mental health expert Dr. Ian Dawe says managing a farm and family business presents some unique challenges and opportunities. Smaller companies, such as family farms, tend to have stronger support networks since staff often work more closely together. That support network is one positive factor in creating a healthy workplace, but there are many other negative factors that still apply. For example, in a small business, each person may be stressed from "wearing many hats" or feel the anxiety of business highs and lows more personally. People from all business sizes develop mental illness, and its effect can have an even bigger impact on a small company.

Dawe also advises owners and managers to create a happy, engaging environment under-

pinned by good job design, autonomy, variety, talent management, employment security and a management style that promotes mutual trust and respect. "It's about having regular reviews, a structured appraisal system where you use it to help employees touch base, see if they're happy at their jobs, talk about any issues and determine what support they might need," he says. "It's also about setting objectives and clearly delineating goals, roles and responsibilities. Reasonable hours, agreed upon deadlines, offline time and flexible working hours can also help reduce stress and boost well-being."

To read more about how to create a safe and pleasant work environment, turn to page 34.

## 2018 MAGAZINE AWARDS

*Milk Producer* staff once again won several awards from the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation. This year, assistant editor and editorial specialist Jennifer Nevans took home gold in the technical feature category for her article entitled *Modern dairy farming*, published in the March 2018 issue. Nevans was also awarded bronze in the press feature category for her August 2017 cover story entitled *Diversifying for success*.

The third award given to magazine staff was for silver in the press feature category for the article I wrote on mental health in the May issue.

The Canadian Farm Writers' and Broadcasters' Awards Competition honours excellence in agricultural journalism, broadcasting, communications and photography.



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**EDITORIAL TEAM:**

**Managing Editor:**  
Sharon Laidlaw  
sharon.laidlaw@milk.org

**Assistant Editor/Editorial Specialist:**

Jennifer Nevans  
jennifer.nevans@milk.org

**FOR ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES CONTACT:**

**Pat Logan**  
**Advertising Representative**  
Phone (519) 788-1559  
Email: pat.logan@milk.org

Co-ordinated by the Communications Division, Laural Adams, communications manager.  
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**MILK PRODUCER**  
6780 Campobello Road,  
Mississauga, Ontario L5N 2L8  
**Phone:** (905) 821-8970  
**Fax:** (905) 821-3160  
**Email:** milkproducer@milk.org

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