

Research shows that farmers and ranchers are at a higher risk for hearing loss.

It is estimated that approximately 6 million of the estimated 12 million Americans who have some form of hearing impairment live in rural areas.

It's never too early or late to start protecting your hearing. **Nearly 70% of teenagers who live or work on a farm show signs of early noise-induced hearing loss.** A majority of these teenagers develop communication difficulties by the age of 30.

Unlike many physical disorders, **hearing loss is often "invisible"**. Most farmers and ranchers are unaware of what they are missing. However, when asked, many admit to having ringing in the ears or difficulty hearing over background noise.

Common sources of noise-induced hearing loss include: machinery such as augers and tractors, chain saws, shotguns, squealing livestock in confined buildings.



Contact us

Lincoln
4600 Valley Road,
Suite 420 Lincoln, NE
68510

Omaha
1313 Farnam on the
Mall
Omaha, NE 68102

Kearney
(800) 545-6244

Scottsbluff
505A Broadway Ste
1100 Scottsbluff, NE
69361

North Platte 200
South Silber, Room
207 North Platte, NE
69101

Office Hours:
Mon.- Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Weekends & Holidays: closed

www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov

Email
ncdhh@nebraska.gov

Phone
(402) 471-3593
(402) 261-2657 VP
(800) 545-6244 Toll Free



Agriculture & Your Hearing

Serving Nebraskans since 1979
Lincoln • Omaha • North Platte
Kearney

When Should I Protect My Hearing?

Sound exposure is measured in decibels (dB) and the examples listed below may help you determine when to take protection.

TOO LOUD:

- Chainsaw : 130 dB
- 12 Gauge Shotgun: 165 dB

Begin Limiting Exposure to Noise:

- Feeding Sows: 100 dB
- Inside Sound-Insulated Tractor: 85 dB

Quiet:

- Leaves Rustling: 60 dB
- Whispers: 30 dB

How Can I Tell If I'm Experiencing Hearing Loss?

The following are common signs of potential or existing hearing loss:

- Difficulty talking to another person while in the equipment operator's position.
- Ringing in the ears after a day's work around loud equipment or machinery.
- The buzzing or ringing remains for a few hours after exposure.
- Muffled sounding speech of others after a day's work on the tractor. This loss of hearing dissipates after a few hours.

Simple Tips for Hearing Protection

Is your farm or ag business "ear friendly"? Protecting your hearing today can avoid long term physical, social and financial consequences. Always be first to hear the markets go up or the priceless words of loved ones.

You can save your hearing by using these protective products:

- Disposable ear plugs
- Corded reusable ear plugs
- A hearing protective band
- Ear muffs

Properly fitting ear plugs or muffs reduce noise 15 to 30 db.

Also, consider these ear-saving measures:

- Install a high-quality muffler on all engine-powered equipment to reduce vibration and noise produced by air flow
- Use equipment that separates the operator from the noise source; for example, a cab or wind/noise shield
- Lubricate machine parts to reduce noise created by friction

What Can I Do About My Hearing Loss?

When dealing with hearing loss, it is critical to understand how your communication will need to be modified. Common adjustments are:

- Speaking face to face at all times
- Using hand signals to communicate around loud machinery
- Using a hearing aid or other assistive listening device
- Using an amplified or captioned telephone (available free through NCDHH's NSTEP program)
- Be patient, do not be hesitate to ask someone to repeat what they've said

Farmers and ranchers work in conditions that frequently expose them to high noise levels. Their risk of sustaining a noise-induced hearing loss can be reduced or prevented by first identifying sources of loud noise, and then by taking steps to reduce exposure to these sources. If a hearing loss occurs, appropriate combinations of technology and on-farm work strategies may be employed to accommodate the hearing loss while continuing to farm or ranch.

Some information used with permission from the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, "Farming With A Hearing Loss"