



**Public Health**  
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**Meeker McLeod Sibley**  
Community Health Services

## *Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services*

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For Immediate Release  
April 28, 2020

### **Area Farmers Face Unique Challenges during Planting Season** COVID-19 Requires Critical Steps to Avoid Stress and Illness

Spring planting is always a busy time for farmers; and a worldwide pandemic only amplifies the stress and uncertainty that accompanies the season.

"Planting season means long hours and lots of unknowns for area farmers," says Kiza Olson, Administrator at Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services. "And while farmers are maintaining their equipment, it's critical they also take care of their health. Now more than ever we need all our farmers and their families to stay well."

Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services offers important tips for farmers to stay healthy and keep their operations going:

- Practice social distancing; at home, in the shed and out in the field
- Make sure you ride single in your cab, and stay six feet away from your team whenever possible
- Practice social distancing when taking deliveries
- Keep sanitizing supplies handy and wash your hands frequently, especially before and after meals, repairs and activities with other people
- Limit non-essential visitors to your farm
- Use technology to communicate as much as possible. Text work plans to employees instead of holding morning meetings in the shed or at the kitchen table. Use a phone or tablet to take a picture of a broken part and send it to the dealer. Call ahead to make sure parts are in stock and ask the dealer to place the part outside the door
- Clean and sanitize shared equipment after each use
- Wipe down doorknobs, steering wheels, radio knobs, grab handles, fuel tank covers and other surfaces people might touch
- Make sure you have a written contingency plan in case you, a family member or one of your workers becomes sick, and share that plan with the people involved

"Farmers are the backbone of our community and our region," says Kiza Olson. "And many days, especially during long hours of planting season, the stress of being a farmer in these times can become almost too much. That's why it's important farmers know they've got someone they can talk to."

The Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's free and confidential. The number to call is 833-600-2670.

