

Week 2 – women and stress levels

26 July

There is no doubt that the dry conditions affect our attitude and frame of mind, but farming families still manage to be optimists. This week, BCG asked three farming women the following question:

1. With a tough start to the season, how do you keep spirits up and stress levels down?



Maree Warne – Culgoa

Maree and Stewart Warne and their son, Cameron and daughter-in-law Lisa, have a mixed property 7km south of Culgoa, producing grain and sheep on sandy clay loam soils. They have half of their cropping program in wheat, and the remainder in barley, canola and peas.

Keeping spirits up and stress levels down: “I remind myself of our good fortune when assessing the important things in life such as good health and happy family relationships and always feel that things have a way of turning out alright even when faced with serious setbacks. During almost 40 years of

farming with my husband Stewart and more recently with our son, Cameron, we have experienced many droughts and the ongoing effects, however there have always been successful seasons to compensate.

Good years and bad, we regularly enjoy an annual holiday, short getaways with friends and trips to Melbourne to see our daughters.

Stress levels are higher in the so called “good” years when marketing decisions are often made “on the run” during the busy long days of harvest.

Regular exercise like morning walks with the dog and a weekly round of golf as well as hobbies such as dressmaking and photography are great ways to ease stress. I also enjoy participating in exercise classes and yoga when available.

We consciously try to eat healthy meals to keep fit but do not deprive ourselves of some indulgences now and again.”



Lynne McKenzie – Pullut

Lynne and Michael McKenzie farm halfway between Rainbow and Jeparit with Michael’s brother and partner. They run sheep and crop two thirds of their farm, seasons permitting, one third in wheat, a third in barley and a third in pulses and canola.

Keeping spirits up and stress levels down: “We’re off to Lano and Woodley this weekend. They will certainly lift our spirits! We’ve had the tickets for weeks and the kids are very excited and planning what else we can do in Bendigo. With cropping stopping and starting quite a few times we have only managed to do a couple of day trips to Horsham in the school

holidays. I was kept busy working out jobs, so they could earn some extra money for when we hit Bendigo. Our boys, Rod and Andrew, are happy to practise their driving skills whenever a gopher is needed. Our daughter, Tori, is just learning to ride the motorbike and hangs laps of the shed yard.

Family life is a good distraction from the farm variables. Lack of rain has been a part of our lives for quite a few years now. When we do get a rain, they enjoy putting heaps of water in the bath.

It rained! The weekend before last we were fortunate to receive 16mm of rain. This was well received by the Under 13’s footballers with lots of mud balls and belly slides as they left the ground.”



Lyn Symons – Carisbrook

Lyn and Daryl Symons crop 800ha of red/black volcanic loam soil with Daryl's father, Keith, at Carisbrook. Fifty-six percent of their land is sown to wheat, 34 percent to canola and the remaining ten percent is fallow.

Keeping spirits up and stress levels down: “To help us cope with the tough season we maintain control over what we can, like keeping our bookwork up-to-date and being timely with sowing, so we know where we are rather than being told. We try not to sweat the small stuff, and try to keep things in perspective.

We attend farmer meetings as they are a group with a shared understanding and we find it helps to mix with positive people.

We keep going to social events, like involving our children in sport and going out with friends for a meal.

We look for diversions outside the business such as going away for a weekend or having a hobby separate from the day-to-day running of the farm.

Don't bottle things up, talk them through with your spouse, and keep the communication lines open between yourself and your partner.”