



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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WHAT IS INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT?

Conflict occurs when two or more people, or groups, disagree. Disagreement occurs when the parties involved have different values, needs, opinions or goals.¹

Behaviours associated with conflict include rudeness, aggression, arguing and competition. These behaviours are used to interfere with the wants or needs of the other party.¹

Conflict can produce a range of negative emotions including fear, anger, sadness, anxiety and frustration.

Conflict might be task-based with disagreements based on the way tasks and activities should be done. Conflict can also be relationship-based, and might involve personal beliefs, goals and feelings.²

What can cause conflict in farming?

- Succession planning
- Conservation versus farming activities³
- Rural community concerns (heritage, resource sharing etc.)⁴
- Lack of social bonds in community⁴
- Economic concerns and competitiveness⁴
- Transportation and access needs
- Concerns about animal welfare⁵



HOW CAN CONFLICT IMPACT A FARMER?



SAFETY



WELLBEING



RELATIONSHIPS



CONFIDENCE

NTS

NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS

- ✓ Experiencing rudeness can lead to negative emotions, anxiety, and distraction all of which could adversely impact task performance.⁵
- ✓ Farmers experiencing conflict and reduced work performance may be more prone to error and at a greater risk of injury and accident.
- ✓ Conflict is associated with tension and stress² which could adversely impact farmer wellbeing and increase the risk of depression.
- ✓ Feeling under stress due to conflict could produce physical stress symptoms such as headache, muscle aches, nausea and digestion problems.
- ✓ Conflict can reduce self-esteem² which could lead to a loss in confidence and produce feelings of uncertainty or a lack of control.
- ✓ Engaging in conflict can put a strain on both personal and work relationships. Persistent conflict could result in withdrawal and eventual isolation.⁴
- ✓ Conflict could also adversely impact non-technical skills such as communication and teamwork, leading to a breakdown in co-ordination and information sharing.



Conflict management strategies⁶

Research suggests four core conflict management strategies tend to be used, some more successful than others!

COMPETITION

Utilisation of tactics and manipulation to ensure conflict is resolved with one person 'winning'.

- This tactic does not display concern for others and is likely to produce ill-feeling and anger within the farm and community.

AVOIDANCE

Exit the discussion or argument in order to bring an end to the conflict.

- This tactic is protective of the individual but may put a strain on relationships with others due to disputes never being resolved.

ACCOMMODATION

Consider the needs and goals of others as well as the needs of the farm / individual. Reach a compromise based on the acknowledgement that not everyone can 'win'.

- This tactic is more likely to maintain relationships with others but can give rise to frustration based on goals not being fully achieved.



COLLABORATION

Engage in open discussion and negotiation with all individuals/ groups. Seek to gain a resolution based on understanding the goals and needs of all involved.

- This tactic is most likely to be successful in the long term and will help improve relationships and reduce frustration and anger by reaching an agreement that suits everyone.



Tips for successful conflict management^{6,7}

- ★ **KEEP TALKING:** In order to reach a resolution the lines of communication must remain open and everyone involved should be as open as they can be about their thoughts and opinions on the conflict.
- ★ **CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES:** If one solution isn't working engage in problem-solving and be open to new and alternative ideas.
- ★ **NEGOTIATE:** This doesn't mean giving in to the wants or needs of others, rather this is an active search for a 'win-win' solution that will satisfy everyone.
- ★ **BE RESPECTFUL:** Engaging in rudeness or aggression is unlikely to be productive and can have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of others. Remain calm and respectful of others.
- ★ **ACKNOWLEDGE MISTAKES:** By admitting you were wrong you can then move forward to a positive resolution.
- ★ **SEE THE POSITIVE:** Sometimes opposing viewpoints can highlight that something is wrong or should be done differently. Conflict that leads to discussion can generate new ways of doing things.
- ★ **DE-ESCALATION:** Use a calm tone when speaking, try an apology if mistakes have been made, turn the conversation to more mundane matters to give each party breathing space.



PRACTISE SELF-CARE

Conflict can cause stress, anxiety and may lead to mental health issues. Look after yourself during any conflict by practising self-care such as:

Relax

- ★ Read a book, watch TV, go for a walk.



Rest

- ★ Make sure your bedroom is conducive to sleeping (cool, dark, quiet) and stick to your preferred sleep pattern.



Relate

- ★ Seek out others for support, talk through your problems and try social activities.



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