

NEBRASKA
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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Nebraska
**Family
Caregiver
Support**
**LIFESPAN RESPITE
NETWORK**



“Knowing about the valuable resource of respite, it’s up to us to continue to advocate and spread the word that help is available to family caregivers.”

To see if you might qualify for the Lifespan Respite Subsidy Program you may contact me at:

1-866-737-7483 / 1-866-RESPITE

and I will be glad to help you.

To find an application, information regarding respite providers and additional respite resources, please go to:

nrns.ne.gov/respite

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**Even
Caregivers
of Livestock
Need
Respite,
Too**

By Ashley Spilinek, Respite Coordinator

There are those who care for loved ones with special needs, and there are loved ones who care for the needs of livestock in our agricultural industry. Growing up on my family's cow/calf operation, I know just how much care cattle need, especially in harsh winters and during calving season. They're the most challenging, yet rewarding, times of the year for cattlemen. Long days and nights of hard work ensure cows and newborn calves are cared for to the max so they are as healthy as possible.

What happens, though, when the ones caring for livestock need to be cared for themselves? A perfect example of this, unfortunately, occurred to my family in March 2012.

Like most farmers and ranchers, my dad can be kind of a risky guy at times. One early morning during his 5 a.m. check of cows, he encountered a first-calf heifer delivering a calf backward. Heifers that aren't calving will be nervous, which means when they're having a calf, they can be 10 times more nervous. So, this nervous heifer having a calf backward in a smaller yet WIDE OPEN SPACE turned out to be a recipe for disaster for my dad. When a calf is arriving backward, chances are the cow will need help having that calf. You get an OB chain, handle and calf puller to help them out.

My dad decided he would just use the chain and handle in this wide-open space and try to pull the calf himself by hand. At the time he put on the chain and handle, the cow was laying down. Being nervous, she jumped up quickly, causing

my dad to twist his knee and fall on it the wrong way. Later that morning, a trip to the doctor's office included an x-ray and MRI revealing that he had completely shattered his ACL.

A couple weeks later, dad had knee surgery leaving it up to my mom to care for him while he was on crutches and couldn't put pressure on his leg for six weeks. Besides that, she went about her other usual daily activities, and also took on the larger role of caring for the livestock.

Just a few days into this new routine, my mom exhibited all the signs of caregiver stress. Granted, my uncle assisted her with the livestock chores and calving duties, but with the extra care she gave dad, it really stressed her out and was overwhelming. In this situation, respite would have been VERY beneficial to my mom, but we did not know respite help was available for her.

After becoming the new Lifespan Respite Specialist at CNCAP, Loup City (Central Nebraska Community Action Partnership), I learned quickly that my mom had a lot in common with people who tell me that the valuable resource of respite care is widely unknown. Had my family been aware of such an excellent resource, my mom could have had less stress and avoided an overwhelming six weeks of caring for dad.

That could also have been the case for other farmers and ranchers I know. A while after my dad shattered his ACL, my uncle ended up tearing his. Though not as serious, had someone referred him to respite, my aunt could have been a little less overwhelmed with the situation.

Not only that, the mom of a close high school friend of mine had a serious brain operation to help stop her epileptic seizures. While her family had great family and friend support, respite could have helped in many ways to give the entire family much-needed breaks.

If the spouses and family members of these farmers and ranchers, and I'm sure many others, had known about respite, their lives and daily chores and activities could have been a little easier and A LOT less stressful.

Knowing about the valuable resource of respite, it's up to us to continue to advocate and spread the word that help is available to caregivers, and it's okay to take an occasional break from caregiving! The more people who become informed, the fewer situations there will be like that of my family and many others.

There are those who care for loved ones with special needs and there are loved ones who care for the needs of livestock in our agricultural industry. Sometimes they may be forgotten, but just like every family caregiver, farmers and ranchers sometimes need respite, too.

Happy Calving Season!

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