

Devon Farm Management Association's February Talk

Protecting The Farm – Protecting Yourself

Dr Emma Loveridge, Director of Rafan House Clinic & Richard Sampson, Regional Support Officer (South West) of The Farming Community Network (FCN)

About the Speakers - Dr Emma Loveridge:

Emma grew up on a dairy and arable farm and returned after her mother died to take up farming again on the Devon Dorset border.



Emma has for the last 15 years run a mental health clinic with 25 clinical psychological specialists. Work in the clinic often focuses on the way in present worries hook onto the experiences of the past in the mind, making them more powerful than they should be and therefore leading to mental health difficulties with a range of consequences.

The clinic is well-known for its work with families and children of all ages, as well as with individuals who are struggling.

After leaving Cambridge University, Emma founded Wind, Sand & Stars Ltd, a company which spent the next 21 years working with the Bedouin Tribes in the Mountains and Deserts of Sinai, Egypt. The company enabled people from a range of backgrounds and ages to travel and to work in the desert area, from medical to military, from tourism to charity, from engineering projects to pilgrimage, with people from 8 to 80 years old. The company employed somewhere in the region of 3,000 people across the years amongst the tribes, as well as UK based. The company also worked in areas of natural disaster and war zones, bringing their expertise of working betwixt and between the approaches of East and West, as well as Developed and Developing nations. Much of the work also engaged with people with pastoral difficulties which came to the fore when in a wilderness or catastrophic setting. She later trained as a psychotherapist to transfer these skills to a UK setting and is a specialist in the way we get tripped up when our own mind, or external circumstances trouble us.

How old are you inside?

Emma's talk will focus on the way in which all our minds go up and down the developmental ladder on any given day, the fall and recovery of our healthy state of mind. It will engage everyone with how this happens to all of us, but for some more catastrophically than others. The talk will offer ways in which to understand this, and particularly offer thoughts on how to help ourselves and others to recover when this happens in a small way, or in a big way.

The talk is both amusing and deeply serious. It asks how old are you inside at any given moment? How old is the person you are talking to? What makes the age within us different from our chronological age and how do we get them back into sink to combat anxiety, depression and other struggles that befall us.

About the Speakers – Richard Sampson:

Richard is a Regional Support Officer (South West) of The Farming Community Network. The FCN is a voluntary organisation and charity that supports farmers, farming families and people in rural communities through difficult times and periods of change. They help to build thriving communities, encourage resilience and help farming people to explore their options.

What does FCN do?

We have a network of over 400 volunteers across England and Wales, many of whom are involved in farming, or have close links with agriculture, and therefore have a great understanding of the issues that farmers, farm workers and farming families regularly face. Our volunteers provide free, confidential, pastoral support to anyone who seeks help, regardless of whether the issue is personal or business-related.

In addition to local groups of volunteers providing in-person support, FCN runs a confidential national helpline (03000 111 999) and e-helpline (help@fcn.org.uk) which is open every day of the year from 7am-11pm.

Our volunteers will “walk with” anyone who seeks support and help them find a positive way through their problems.

We have helped thousands of people deal with a variety of issues, including financial difficulties, animal disease, mental health and family disputes.

How do FCN volunteers support the farming community?

FCN volunteers provide support in a number of ways. These can include helping farmers to explore their options, building relationships with bank managers, acting as family mediators and even supporting farmers through legal issues. We do not give professional advice, but we can be an empathetic third party who will ‘walk with’ you through any issues, helping you to find a positive way forward.

More often than not, farm workers just need someone who will listen to them. FCN volunteers are on hand to provide a sympathetic ear, which is why our confidential helpline is such an important asset to those who seek our help.

Approximately 40 volunteers help with the running of the FCN helpline. Cases that come through the FCN helpline are usually referred to a local FCN volunteer, who will try and organise a face-to-face meeting with the person seeking help. It is entirely up to them how much support they need or want from FCN.

We work with a variety of stakeholders critical to the successful outcome of cases. These include government bodies, agricultural organisations, other charities and healthcare services. Our volunteers provide support, facilitation and direct links to sympathetic professionals.

The FCN also has their FarmWell platform which provides the farming community with useful information around business resilience and personal wellbeing, helping farmers take a proactive approach in planning for the future, managing change and staying physically and mentally well.