



A Guide to Talking With a Farmer

Your Observation	You Might Say...	Or...
A farmer stops talking to you, puts their head in their hands and shakes their head (“I give up”)	I can see you are frustrated and even feeling like the situation is impossible. I find a few deep breaths can help and I’m here to listen if you want to tell me what’s got you feeling like this.	
A farmer starts crying	Wow! You are really hurting. I’m wondering what is making you so sad right now and am here to listen if you want to talk about it.	
A farmer says, “I am all done talking to you”	I can understand why you would feel that way. Do we just need to take a break and come back to take another shot at settling this? I would love to go see your new lamb and then try again to finish our conversation together.	
A farmer starts ranting about the government and isn’t really making sense	I want to understand what you’re saying, but it’s hard when you are (describe observable behavior - yelling, talking fast, jumping from one topic to another). If you want, I can tell you about a few things that a lot of people find help them to calm down/slow down/focus better.	<p>[Hear them out to a certain degree, find a tactful way to get their focus back.]</p> <p>[Explain regulations and describe cost share opportunities to help achieve compliance.]</p> <p>There are opportunities to help you adhere to the rules.</p> <p>Thanks for sharing your experience with [xyz] / I appreciate you sharing that with me.</p>



A farmer tells you about a very tragic event and does not want to get back to the issue at hand.	What you've gone through is not easy! Sometimes when something like this happens, people need to talk about it to start moving forward. Tasks like filling out the form we're working on together are tough to focus on and yet I know you want to meet this deadline.	[Provide some space and time, listen.] Let's take a break. [If someone else is available to continue what is needed, work with them].
A farmer is upset because of the last visit and telling you to, "get the hell off their property."	Yeah, that was pretty rough, and I can tell it's upsetting you now. Do you think we need to talk about it so we can better understand what made you so mad?	Maybe we can avoid that the next time I have to tell you something that you don't want to hear.
A farmer won't open the door for you, but you know they can hear you.	I think you might be hearing me, but you'd rather not talk to me right now. I wonder if you're feeling mad or scared.	



The MassGrown Wellness program is designed and developed to address the specific mental health and wellness needs of the Massachusetts agriculture community and its supporters. Web-based resources, online and in-person peer-based training and outreach to the Massachusetts' agricultural community are provided free of charge to all MA farmers and those supporting them. Learn more at www.mass.gov/massgrownwellness.



Farm First is a Vermont-based, public program formed to provide farmers and their families with support, resources and information to reduce stress. We are not a technical assistance organization but can help connect you to such resources. We listen well and can help you to problem solve. You don't have to be alone with your problems. www.farmfirst.org.