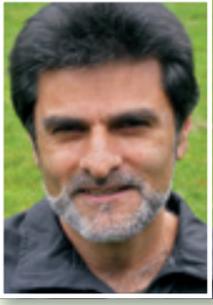


# Tars' Tale-Spins



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## OPEN

Even though it's been three months since the flooding of Sumas Prairie, the consequences are far from over. Everyone recognizes that it will take time, effort, money and a lot of support to help the affected farms/families/staff deal with

everything. We can all understand that even once the cows are being milked and housed at home again, the family home is probably the last project to get back to 'normal.' A lot of families lost a lot of belongings due to the flood waters. I know it's just 'stuff,' but I found myself contemplating what I might have lost - treasured family pictures, kids' keepsakes, books/articles from my career. We all have some special stuff that is irreplaceable. I know those losses are hard - even though no one wants to complain about that amid the bigger disruption to life, livestock and farm.

The handwritten sign above Crossroads Dairy shop reads simply 'OPEN.' Gracious - simple - welcoming. **Open** is what everyone needed - **Open** signified a place to come and rest, restore, restock. **Open** described the hearts, minds and prayers of all the people donating and supporting our friends/neighbours/farmers during difficult weeks. **Open** became a place for the surrounding area to gather in common fellowship - supporting one another in ways beyond the material. **Open** tells people they do not have to struggle alone. Thank You Arends family for being **Open** and blessing the community in immeasurable ways.

Through this entire time, the ongoing efforts of so many people, companies, organizations, churches and others across the farming community (many from across the country!) have continued to provide meals, gift cards, supplies, **generous monetary donations**...and much needed **hope**. Even government representatives have been trying to make meaningful and rapid decisions to help the recovery efforts move faster than typical. There are so many stories of incredible selfless giving to help through both the immediate crisis and the exhausting weeks/months that continue. You will see some more of these accounts in this issue. In time, things will return to 'normal,' though memories and other reminders will never fade. Let us remember the great courage, kindness and generosity of everyone surrounding the farming community. **People care.**

### Adrenalin Only Lasts So Long

The flood crisis brought about pressure like few will ever experience in their lives. Initially people get through with tenacity and adrenalin - there is no other way. But what happens when exhaustion sets in after weeks of relentless work and worries?

I'm far from a mental health expert...but I talk with a lot of folks and sometimes the signs of stress seem excessive.

Mental health is continuing to gain more mainstream acknowledgement - somewhat slowly in agriculture - where hard-working farmers are especially reluctant to recognize, much less go asking for help when they are struggling. I get it - most of us just think we need to dig deeper/work harder/take a day off...and it will be okay. Most of the time, we get through the rough patches with some rest, a holiday, socializing. **But sometimes, it takes much more.** The dairy industry has had numerous challenges in recent years that add pressure to the regular hard, long days. Industry leaders have been living the stress and challenges that come from national marketing/pricing pressures, international trade deals, limited processing capacities, COVID challenges, milk transport/dumping, activists, animal welfare issues and more.

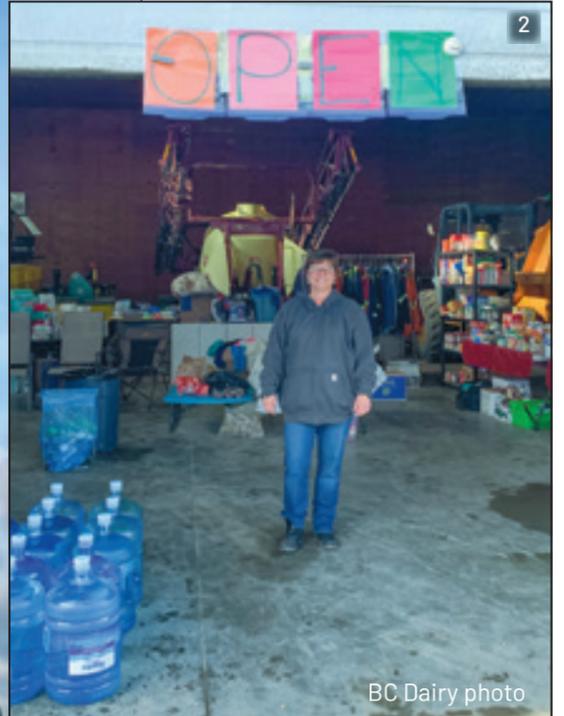
The wildfires, droughts, floods, freezing cold, low forage supply, high input costs, squeezed margins can create a load that is crushing and relentless. How do you continue to find the energy you need to farm, when the stuff in the background is holding you down? I certainly don't have the answers...**but I know it helps to talk.** A number of organizations have stepped forward during this time to provide mental health supports. If you or someone you know seems to be struggling excessively because of the floods or other challenging difficulties - help them reach out for help. 

**1-WestGen's location next to Hwy 1 and large paved yard made it an ideal location to fill grain totes and have them helicoptered to farms unreachable by roads.**



1

**2-Alison Arends and her family at Crossroads Dairy saw a need and became one Hub of Hope for the Sumas Prairie community.**



2

BC Dairy photo

**3-WestGen experienced the farming community's rescue firsthand in the first flood. Here, their people gladly filled sandbags for the community when the second atmospheric river came 2 weeks later.**



4

RBC photo



3

Kevin Graham photo

**4-Michelle, Steve and Melanie brought pizzas and much-needed laughs to the Crossroads Hub - feeding the spirit is also important.**



5

Tracey Tuin photo

**5-Every flood image tells a story of a farm's emergency and the long road back to 'normal.'**

**6-Even after the water receded, the work is daunting in every direction.**

**7-The days have been long and tiring for farmers like Grant Bouwman of Mardelen Holsteins.**



6

Richard Bosma photo

**“It's up to each of us to watch for those who may be lost in their despair. There are multiple supports - see AgSafe, DoMoreAg and the Canadian Mental Health Association for starting points. Take care everyone. Spring is coming.”**

**See AgSafe on page 60 for more info on mental health support.**



7

Bouwman Family photo