

Agriculture Hearing Loss Facts

Farmers in the United States:

- There are **48 million Americans** who have a significant hearing loss. *(2011 National Health Interview Survey)*
- Hearing loss from **exposure to noise is common** among farmers and agricultural workers. *(Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, 2018)*
- Over **one-third of the farmers in the United States** have hearing loss. *(2016 National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)*
- Daily exposure to **harmful noise starts at a young age**, with the sounds of livestock, tractors, chainsaws, firearms, combines and other noisy equipment. *(2016 National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)*
- **For most farmers, hearing loss occurs gradually** over many years and may only be noticed once it is a serious problem. *(Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health 2018)*

In the United States...

- More than **22 million Americans** are exposed to damaging levels of noise. *(2016 National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety)*
- Hearing Loss ranks as the **third most common** health issue in the United States behind heart disease and arthritis. *(National Institutes of Health)*
- Loss of hearing is the **most common service-oriented disability** among American veterans. Half of all blast-related injuries sustained result in permanent hearing loss for veterans. *(Hearing Loss Association of America)*
- There is a **strong relationship between age and reported hearing loss**. The following groups show a hearing loss: 2% of adults 45-64 years old, 8.5% adults 55-64, 25% of adults 65-74 years old and 50% of adults 75 years old or older. *(National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)*

In Kentucky:

- Nearly **700,000** deaf and hard of hearing residents. *(2011 American Community Survey Data, United States Census)*
- Kentucky ranks **third per capita** nationally in people identified as deaf or hard of hearing. *(2010 American Community Survey Data, United States Census)*

Agriculture Hearing Loss Prevention

How Can Farmers Protect Their Hearing?

- **Reduce Sound Levels.** When selecting new equipment, ask about sound levels and pick the quietest option.
- **Perform routine equipment maintenance.** Fixing mufflers on engines, lubricating bearings, and replacing worn parts will reduce noise levels and improve farming operations.
- **Isolate yourself from noise.** Working in motorized equipment equipped with cabs or enclosures will reduce noise exposure. Open tractors, loaders and ATVs expose operators to more noise.
- **Use personal protective equipment.** Use hearing protection when working in noisy settings. The earmuff style offers the best protection and is easy to use. Expandable ear plugs are the next best option.
- **All hearing protection equipment has a “Noise Reduction Rating,”** or “NRR”, usually between 15 and 30 decibels. Choose the hearing protection with the highest NRR value.
- **Limit daily exposure duration.** Reducing the amount of time you are exposed to noise can limit its harmful effects.

(Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, University of Iowa)

KCDHH—How We Can Help!

Do you have trouble hearing on the phone?

KCDHH provides specialized equipment such as TDDs, amplified, captioned and wireless phones and devices to eligible deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians at no charge.

Looking for Information, Referrals, or Assistance?

KCDHH:

- Maintains a library of books, periodicals, DVDs, videotapes, and CDs on deaf and hard of hearing issues that are available and loaned to the public.
- Produces resources and provides information, education, and outreach through web and social media, publications, presentations, and trainings and makes referrals to assist concerns.
- Provides assistance and advocacy or makes appropriate referrals to agencies that can offer the best assistance for you and your needs.