

SPRING 2020

New Mexico  
 **AgrAbility**  
Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

Spring News 2020



Photo courtesy  
USDA

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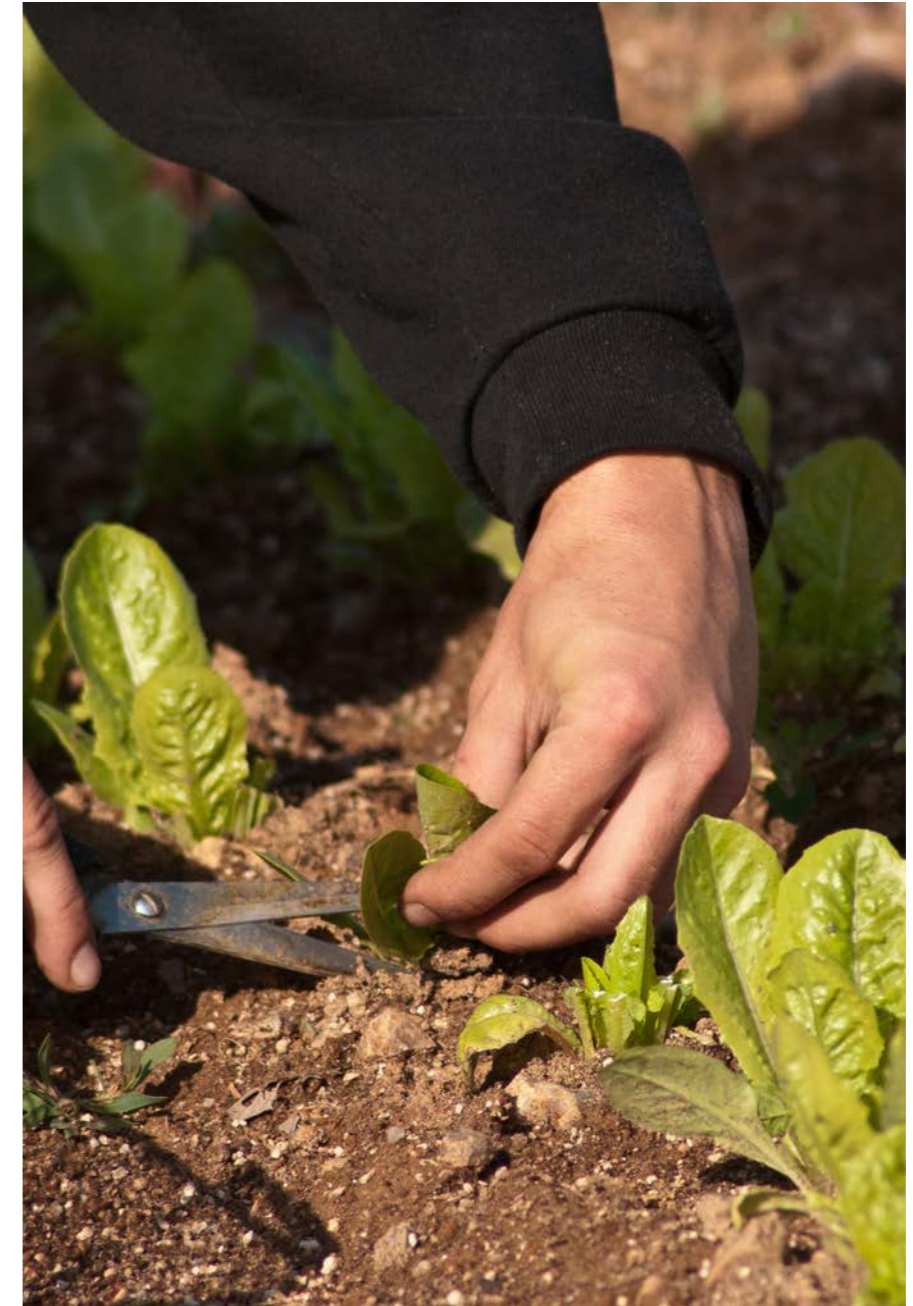


Photo United States Department of Agriculture

# Directors Message

**Dr. Sonja Koukel**  
**New Mexico State University**  
**Cooperative Extension Service**

Hello from the NM AgrAbilityProject team.

What a different world we are experiencing as we cope with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This public health situation has upended life as we know it and we are all grappling with figuring out what the future holds.

While some individuals can telework, many industries have shut down or are limiting access to help reduce exposure to the virus. Working from home is what our farmers and ranchers do so there is no adaptation needed in that respect. However, producers, their families and local businesses do face heavy stress levels from dealing with the virus.

Stress is defined as the “pressure” or “tension” you feel when faced with a situation that’s new, unpleasant or threatening. Stress can be positive, such as planning for a wedding or the birth of a child. The stress that food producers associate with this pandemic is largely negative due to supply chain limitations, loss of income that leads to financial issues, and concerns about family well-being.

Overtime, stress can affect our overall wellness. Some warning signs of stress you might experience:

- Physical (body) – headaches, feeling tired, back and neck muscles ache, stomach issues
- Mind – constant worry, nightmares, inability to make decisions, negativity
- Emotions – irritability, depression, feeling discouraged or hopeless, anxiety, panic
- Behavior – restlessness, increased use of alcohol or drugs, loss of appetite, inability to

sleep

It’s important to find stress-reducing strategies that work best for you. You can’t care for your farm or family well if you don’t care for yourself. Taking care of yourself, your friends and your family can help you cope with stress as it gives you some feeling of control over the situation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides these tips for coping with stress during the pandemic. There is probably more than one tip that can help. Try a few to see which ones work best for you.

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, especially those about the Coronavirus. This includes social media sites such as facebook, Instagram, twitter, and others.
- Practice deep breathing techniques, stretching exercises, or meditation.
- Exercise. Do what you can to break a sweat. There are chair exercises designed for sitting down workouts. A quick Google search will provide several free videos.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time for yourself. Do activities that you enjoy and that bring you joy.
- Connect with people. Sharing your concerns and feelings with a trusted individual can be greatly beneficial.

Reach out to a professional if you or someone you care about are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others:

- Call 911.
- Visit the disaster Distress Helpline, call 1-800-985-5590, or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

More information on Coping with Stress During the COVID-19 Pandemic visit the New Mexico State University Extension Service webpage at <https://aces.nmsu.edu/covid19/health.html>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

New Mexico, like the rest of the world, has not been exempted from the COVID-19 health emergency, and it looks like everyone is in it for the long haul.

However, the animals and plants grown for food, fiber, and feed must continue to be cared for and grown. Many news stories have highlighted the difficulties being experienced by our food growers. In southern New Mexico, a shortage of agricultural workers is hampering the ability of farmers to plant and care for our beloved chile. More importantly, the health of the farming and ranching workforce is a priority.

The Federal and State government response to help fund small business is in full effect. The USDA has specific links to agricultural resources, rural development funds, financial assistance and technical assistance to help businesses get through this hard time.

The State of New Mexico has up to date information and resources about the local health situation at:

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/public/>

Meanwhile, the New Mexico AgrAbility Project remains available for tele-visits and tele-phone consultations by phone or internet, to serve farmers and ranchers regarding assistive technologies, environmental modifications and other ideas to adapt farms for people with disabilities.

# COVID-19 and Agriculture

For more information on the immediate actions USDA is taking to respond to COVID-19, visit: [usda.gov/coronavirus](https://usda.gov/coronavirus).

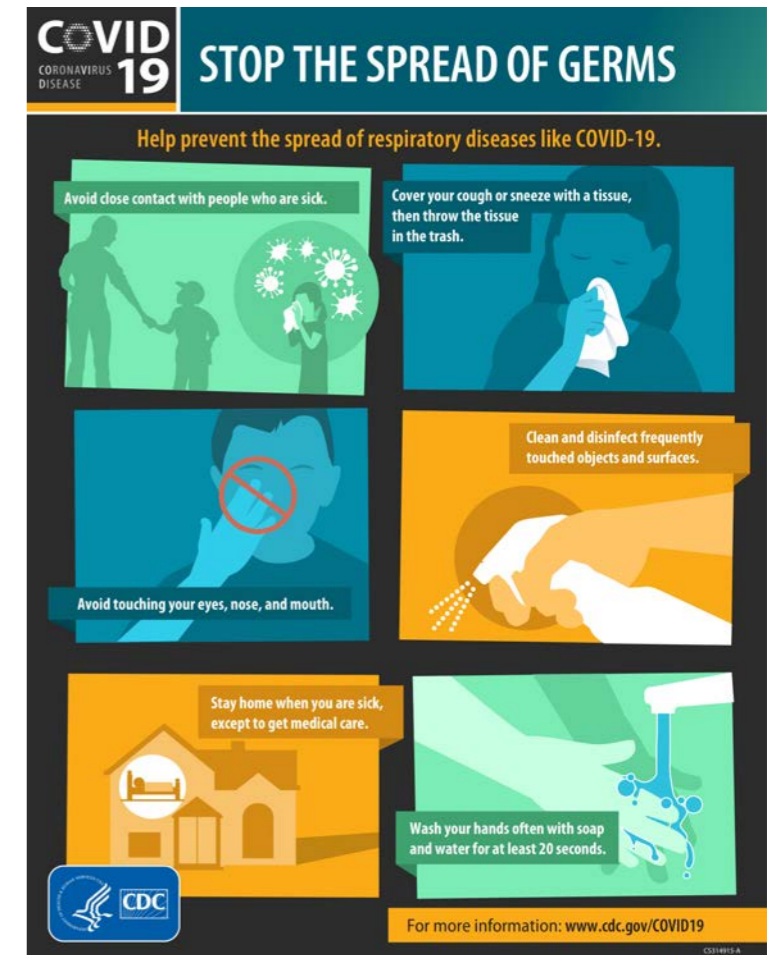


Image from Centers for Disease Control



Acoma Pueblo Farmers,  
USDA Photo Public  
Domain, Photographer  
Lance Cheung

# Perspectives On Quality of Life

An excerpt from **Agriculture for Life**, a publication of Able-Tech at Oklahoma State University-Seretean Wellness Center

Quality of Life has been studied in many different ways by researchers using different measurement tools.

Quality of Life (QOL) is defined as the general well-being of individuals. QOL tools have been developed to look at discrete aspects of health or medical-related QOL, psychological and emotional QOL, economic QOL, proximity to amenities and resources, and community and social QOL.

Agricultural QOL has also been studied in terms of production, income, and family relationships. Quality of life probably has to do with most or all of these things, making it hard to separate one thing from another in determining what QOL really means. In truth, QOL is probably more of a perception than a measurable quantity.

After all, QOL is perceived differently from individual to individual. Some individuals may rate their QOL as poor

after experiencing a health challenge, even after successful recovery, while other individuals with a disability may consider their QOL good despite having physical, emotional, or cognitive limitations, especially if they are able to participate in important activities or occupations. Others find improved QOL perceptions by becoming “deeper” human beings in terms of spirituality, life meaning, or satisfaction in relationships.

Farmers and ranchers with disabilities consistently report better QOL if they are actively participating in farm or ranch-related tasks. Other valued aspects of QOL include maintaining as much independence as possible and maintaining valued roles in the family and on the farm or ranch. Of course, at the end of the day, it is hard for someone else to “measure” your QOL except by using your own measuring stick.

Some good questions to ask yourself are:

*What does my farm/ranch mean to me?*

*What does it mean to my spouse or family?*

*What is the story of this farm/ranch? How did it start?*

*How does the history of this farm/ranch influence me?*

*What type of challenges or disability conditions do I have?*

*How are these challenges or conditions affecting my quality of life?*

*How strongly do I feel I can overcome these challenges?*

*What is a typical day like on the farm/ranch?*

*What do I like most about farming/ranching?*

*Like the least?*

*What do I value about being a farmer/rancher? How do I define quality of life?*

*How does farming/ranching influence my quality of life? In good ways? In negative ways?*

*How would I rate my overall perception of quality of life right now? (high, good, neutral, low)*

*What will I need to :*

*Maintain or improve my quality of life?*

*Health? (physical, mental, emotional)*

*Environmental? (physical layout, tools, equipment, assistive technologies, modifications)*

*Support? (spouse, family, neighbors, community, spiritual)*

*Resources? (educational, informational)*

*Economically? (financial, income, debt reduction)*

PARTNER UPDATE

# Mandy's Farm



Photo courtesy April Wood

The AgrAbility Apprenticeship Project has had some major changes as we adjust to the guidelines set in place to maintain safety through the COVID-19 Pandemic. In March, we were forced to cancel onsite classes due to the risks posed by the virus to Mandy's Farm residents and apprentices.

As we all know, farms do not sleep. Plants still must be watered, animals must still be fed, fences must still be mended, and weeds must still be pulled. All the plant starts the food growers had been growing up and all the chicks still needed care. Through May we were able to move much of the new food-growers projects to their homes through this period. For food-growers with no space at home we have moved their projects to the North Learning Garden located at Mandy's Farm Administrative offices.

The project is still moving forward through online meetings and check-ins. However, this pandemic has brought with it a challenge for the apprenticeship program to improve its accessibility to those who need it most through a time when people are spending more time at home. We are excited to meet the challenge and hopefully will grow the project in a way that we can reach more people with an interest in building food security for our nation.

## UNM PARTNER UPDATE

### Contact UNM to participate in the New Mexico COVID-19 Quality of Life Survey

AgrAbility partner, University of New Mexico-Occupational Therapy Graduate Program has received a National Institutes of Health funded grant from the UNM-Center for Translational Science to study the perceptions of the effects of COVID-19 on New Mexico residents living in rural and frontier areas.

UNM-OTGP will be using a standardized quality of life measure and also a short interview to discover how New Mexican's are coping with the health emergency and learning more about changes or disruptions to daily life routines.

Any resident of New Mexico is eligible to participate in the study and can contact the occupational therapy program to learn more at:

Carla Wilhite  
[cwilhite@salud.unm.edu](mailto:cwilhite@salud.unm.edu)  
Ph: 505-272-3324

The survey and interview can be conducted by phone or

Photo: courtesy C. Wilhite



can be mailed with a pre-addressed stamped return envelope.

It is anticipated that the information will help local and state organizations better understand how New Mexican's have been affected during this time and how to better provide services and resources to rural areas.

Please help us help you and consider being surveyed.

**The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sails.**

**-William A. Ward**

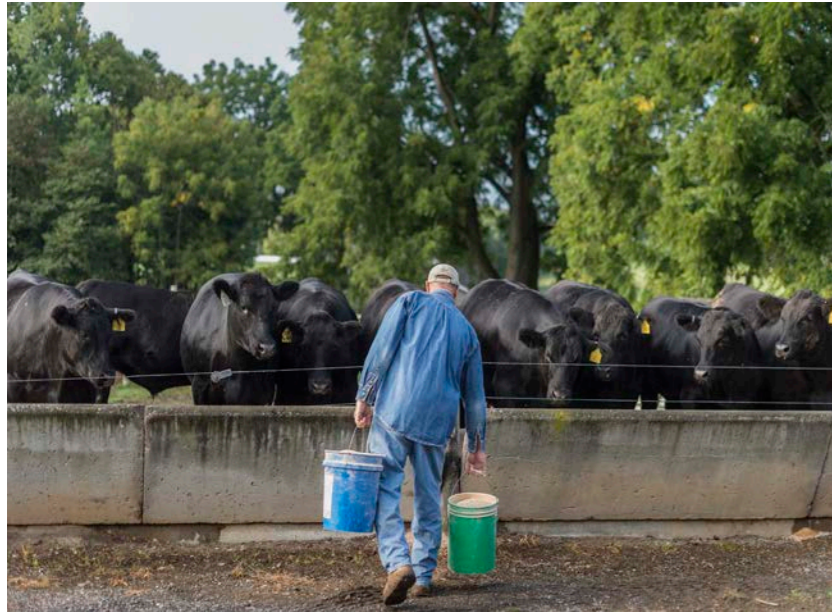


Photo USDA

## NMTAP Partner Update

The NM Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) is available to talk to any group of food growers, professionals working with farmers/ranchers with challenging health issues, community groups, or the general public. We can share general information about what NMAP has to offer. Additionally, we are happy to provide education about assistive technology that is available to help users with daily activities or food growing tasks. Small group gatherings are an opportunity to share successes and challenges among those who attend. NMTAP will have a few samples of technology on hand for individuals to use. We welcome an invite to come to your gathering, coalition, cooperative, or community group.

Educational presentations can be held virtually over the internet, by teleconference, or done onsite when social gathering restrictions are lifted. We all know that information is power, so contact NMTAP for more information or to schedule a presentation. Contact by phone: (505) 841-4464, or email: [tracy.agiovlasis@state.nm.us](mailto:tracy.agiovlasis@state.nm.us). The educational information can be short and sweet now, during the busy growing season, or pre-scheduled for a future date.

Got Pain? Got Stress? NMTAP is available to help food growers anywhere in NM who have challenges in getting tasks done around the farm. Using Occupational Therapists with the expertise in finding easier, safer, and better ways to accomplish duties, we will work with you to find solutions that fit your life. Contact us as noted above to explore that option at your convenience! Occupational Therapists are welcome to contact us as well.



Photo from Herc-U-Lift

## Technology Corner

Older equestrians, ranchers, and working cowboys and those with back pain or arthritis may benefit from assistive technology that improves the ability to tack up and mount the horse. The Equipment Corner looks at two pieces of equipment: the Herc-U-Lift and the Western Stirrup Aid.

The Herc-U-Lift is made in the United States and is designed to lift and place the saddle on well-broke horses who will stand in place. The lift is operated with an electric winch and can pivot. The configuration of the lift is designed to be portable, but can

also be mounted in one location. Mounting blocks are a traditional safe way to gain some height in reaching stirrups, but aren't portable. If a rider has to dismount to check and doctor a calf, it can become a problem when it's time to remount.

The Western Stirrup Mount aid can be discreetly removed and stowed in a saddle or cante bag after mounting. There are also mounting aids available that can be adjusted to length and prices vary. Stirrup swivels are also another kind of adjustment that can help relieve the knee pain for riders.

The authors, reviewers, and publishers assume no liability in connection with any use of the products discussed and make no warranty (express or implied) in that respect; nor can it be assumed that all safety measures are indicated herein or that additional measures may be required. The user, therefore, must assume full responsibility, both as to persons and as to property, for the use of these materials including any which might be covered by patent. References to products in this news are not intended as endorsements to the exclusion of others.

**Herc-U-Lifts**  
 P.O.Box 308  
 Macon, MO 63552  
 Phone: (660) 699-3845  
 Hours: 9-5 CT  
[aaccmmee@yahoo.com](mailto:aaccmmee@yahoo.com)

<http://herculifts.com/herculifts-for-horses/>



**Western Stirrup Mount Aid**

<https://www.statelinetack.com/item/western-legup-mounting-assistant/SLT733078/>