

### The BSE Crisis: Not Just About Cattle

While a great deal of worry about BSE centred around the possible spread of Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), little attention was paid to the health impact of the economic and emotional toll of the BSE crisis on the health of farmers, ranchers and their families.



As this survey showed, the risk for this population of health problems (physical, mental, and social) was far greater than the risk to the general population of vCJD.

The majority of participants (61%) reported that their health had been affected by the BSE crisis.

For many it was the single most significant impact on their health at that time; 40% reported the BSE crisis had *significantly* affected their health.

### The Fact that Farm is Both Workplace and Home Complicates Risk Management Policy and Individual Decisions

The majority (56%) of the 273 participants had been involved in farming or ranching for more than 25 years. Men were more likely than women to have been involved this long. The vast majority (70%) of farmers and ranchers were following parents, grandparents *and* great grandparents in their chosen occupation – they were the 4th generation of farmer/rancher. Again, women (16%) were less likely than men (6%) to be a multi-generation farmer/rancher.



Over 60% of the farm/ranch operations on which people worked had been in their family for 2 or more generations; 18% had been in their family for 4 or more generations. Over 60% of respondents had lived in the present farm for more than 20 years. About 45% of respondents were very worried about keeping the farm in the family.



As indicated on Information Sheet 1, 44% of participant farms/ranches reported that they could get by on the family income, but it was tight. The move to extra work off the farm to support the family is evident in this sample where 55% had non-farm employment. The percentage with off-farm employment did not differ by number of acres farmed but it differed by age, with younger age groups more likely to be working off the farm as well as on the farm.

About 45% of respondents were very stressed by not having enough time for entertainment and recreation and about 50% by having problems balancing work and family responsibilities. Not surprisingly, 30% were very stressed over conflicts with their spouse on spending priorities.