



Are You at Risk for Hearing Loss?¹

Nebraska Rural Health & Safety Coalition²

If you are a farmer, you are at risk for hearing loss caused by noise exposure in your work. This can be seen as early as the teen years. More commonly, symptoms appear in the 30s and 40s and become more severe with time.

HOW CAN YOU TELL THAT YOU HAVE A HEARING PROBLEM?

You may have to strain to hear normal conversation. Background noise at a social gathering, from a motor vehicle, or from machinery will interfere with your ability to hear more than it will with that of people who have normal hearing. You may find yourself turning up the volume of the television or radio so loud that others complain. Your hearing can be tested in the office of your physician or by an audiologist in order to confirm that there is a problem. This will help determine the cause. A visit to a physician who is an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist) may be recommended.

WHAT CAUSES HEARING LOSS?

We all experience a decrease in hearing with aging, which usually becomes apparent after age 50. Ear infections, seen most often in small children, can lead to hearing loss. If the noise is loud enough to prevent a conversation, it may be damaging your hearing.

- In farmers, exposure to noise from machinery is an important cause for hearing loss.
- Tractors, grinders, augers, and other machinery contribute to this problem.
- The noise from lawn mowers and chain saws can be harmful.



Figure 1. Ear plugs

- Episodic, very loud sounds such as those generated by guns and by pigs squealing can damage hearing.
- Listening to loud music may also be a factor.
- Having the ear canal obstructed by ear wax can temporarily decrease hearing.
- A head injury may damage hearing.

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Figure 2. Ear muffs

- Rare causes of hearing loss include tumors, exposure to toxic medicines and inherited conditions.

WHAT TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS?

Hearing aids can improve the hearing of those suffering from noise induced hearing loss. However, preventing the problem is the best approach to take.

HOW CAN NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS BE PREVENTED?

Cabs on tractors can decrease the noise level to the safe range. Wearing hearing protectors, consisting of ear plugs or muffs, helps preserve hearing.