

HEARING LOSS ON THE FARM

Hearing loss is common among farmers and agricultural workers, but there are ways to prevent and overcome it.



Photo: Kendra Martin / AgrAbility PA

Hearing loss can occur as part of the aging process, often due to increased exposure to loud, prolonged noise. Noise-induced hearing loss can occur at any age.

Hearing loss does not have to negatively impact your ability to work on the farm and enjoy life.

When To Consider Hearing Aids

It might be time to consider hearing aids if you experience:

- Difficulty hearing people speak
- Difficulty hearing high-pitched sounds
- Turning up the TV or radio to a level higher than comfortable to those around you
- Ringing or other constant noise in ears
- Withdrawing from events due to inability to hear
- Others have mentioned potential hearing loss to you

How to Obtain Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are not *one size fits all* – work with a hearing professional to determine the best technology for your needs.

The first step is to meet with your primary care physician (PCP). They can give you a referral to see an audiologist (licensed hearing professional) or **otolaryngologists** (ear, nose, and throat doctor). This specialist will provide a simple, painless hearing evaluation.

This evaluation will determine if you have hearing loss and to what degree. This specialist can discuss options based on your needs and communication style. If you do not have a PCP, contact a local hearing specialist directly.

“By using hearing protection every single time, you can prevent hearing loss caused by noisy equipment.”

– Leslie Purcell, Audiologist at Penn State University

Protect your hearing

The effect of noise on hearing depends on how loud it is and how long it lasts.

- Reduce duration of loud noises
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) -- ear muffs or plugs
- Select hearing protection based on noise intensity





Photos: PA Assistive Technology Foundation

Farm Factors Impacting Hearing Aids

Farming factors can impact the selection and use of hearing aids.

Rapid changes in noise levels and environmental exposures such as dust and moisture can impact hearing aids. Be sure to discuss these factors with your hearing specialist when selecting hearing aids.

Wearing Hearing Aids in a Farm Environment:

- Utilize mute functions AND wear hearing protection when working around loud noises such as tractors, saws, and shop equipment
- Clean hearing aids regularly – daily if working in dirty or dusty conditions
- Use a drying kit to remove moisture that may occur from perspiration or weather conditions

Implementing these practices is key to keeping your hearing aids in good working order and to preventing additional hearing loss.

Financial Assistance

Hearing aids can range in price from under \$1,000 to more than \$8,000. There are funding resources available to help cover this cost. Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that provides free information and assistance to people with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians to help them fund assistive technology, such as hearing aids. Pennsylvania's Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs also covers hearing aids for those who are eligible. Private health insurance may cover part of the cost of hearing aids.

Other resources include: Starkey Hearing Foundation's HearNow, ACHIEVA Family Trust, PA's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and U.S. Dept of Veteran Affairs (VA).

“Having hearing aids is like night and day...it's a life-changer at my age.”

**– Bob, PATF borrower
(pictured left)**

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Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF), founded in 1998, provides education and financing opportunities and advocates for people with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians, helping them to acquire assistive technology devices and services that improve the quality of their lives. It is headquartered in King of Prussia, PA and uses a network of Funding Assistance Coordinators across the state to assist prospective borrowers.