

Aging Farmers

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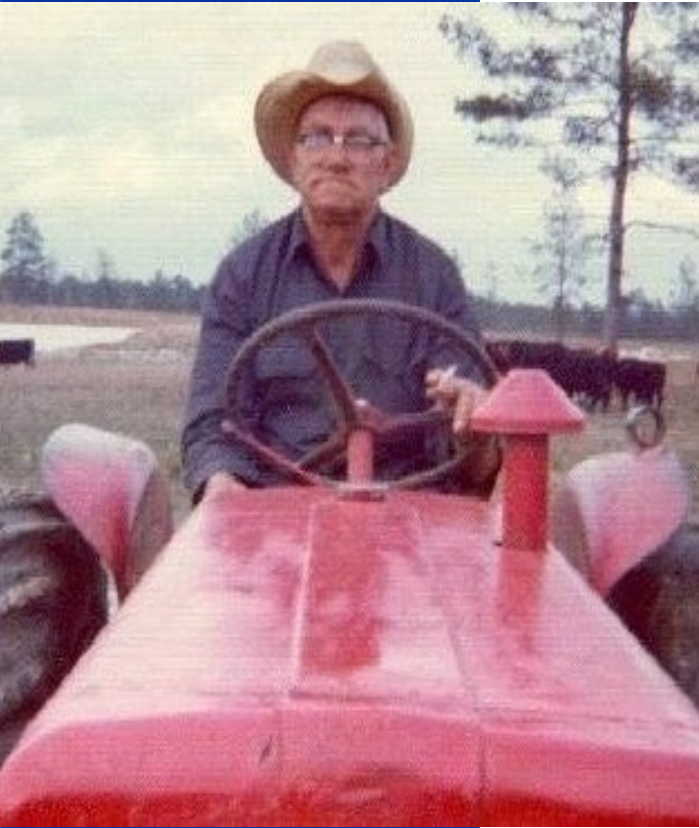


Main Points

- People age
- With age comes typical and atypical physical changes
- Farmers age and rarely retire
- People can be helped to keep doing the things they need and want to do in a safe way



Kentucky's Farmers are Aging



- Average age of retirement of American farmers is 75 (2019).
- The average age of the American farmer is 58.3 and climbing.
- Farmers over the age of 50 are the principal operators on 64% of KY's 86,541 farms.
- Agriculture is one of the top 3 industries employing older adults 60+ (19.8%) (2006 data)
- Top 5 health conditions:
 - Arthritis/Rheumatism
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Vision Problems
 - Hearing Problems
 - Back Problems



Health and Aging

Typical age-related changes:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Sensitivity- touch, taste, smell
- Balance
- Reaction time slows
- Decrease in strength and flexibility
- Reduced grip strength and manual dexterity

Common Age-Related Chronic Conditions:

- High blood pressure
- Lung disease
- Heart disease
- Arthritis
- Pain
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Cataracts, glaucoma, etc.



How to Help Manage Change Over Time

- Change the person
 - Health behaviors, PT, etc.
- Change the activity
 - Look at work/task process
- Change the environment
 - Implement useful adaptive and assistive devices



Change the Person:

General Health Prevention

- Regular check ups (including vision)
- Get plenty of rest
- Stay hydrated
- Health diet, appropriate weight
- No smoking
- Exercise for both strength and endurance
- Protective clothing/devices (eye, ear, skin, temperature, knee pads, respiratory, welding helmet, etc.)
- Stretch- avoid awkward stationary posture, reduce repetitive movements, take breaks
- Use appropriate ergonomics: proper lifting, keep loads close to body and at belt buckle height, AVOID TWISTING, push rather than pull
- Ask for help
- Work efficiently
- Know your limits and respect them



Change the Task

- Limit particularly hazardous tasks to daylight hours where light is the brightest
- Prioritize what must be done in a day
- Plan to do the most strenuous/dangerous activities early before you get tired
- Alternate difficult jobs with easy ones to increase your energy over a longer period of time
- Analyze workflow for efficiency- combine similar tasks, complete all the work in one area before moving to another task, cut out unnecessary steps
- Have access to multi height shelving/storage and workbenches
- Store lighter things lower to ground and heavier things waist height
- Use organizational techniques such as visual labeling and easy open containers



Change the Environment

- Lighting
 - Increase the light levels in barns and other work environments
 - Lights go on with automatic sensors
- Equip stairs and steps with handrails and non-slip surfaces
- Gates
 - Equip gates with easily accessible and workable latches and locks
 - Electronic gate controls
- Animal handling
 - Livestock handling equipment
 - Automated feed equipment
- Use hearing protection while operating loud equipment or in noisy animal confinement areas
- Be aware of the effects of over the counter and prescription medications that may reduce alertness, decrease sense of balance, etc.



Environment

- Work smarter not harder! Have the appropriate tools
 - Use utility carts to move things around- gather all tools you will need at one time
 - Use an ATV to get around versus walking or getting in and out of a pick up or tractor
 - Hand tools with larger, cushioned grips and ergonomic handles
- Flooring
 - Non-slip
 - Remove trip hazards, keep walkways clear
 - Anti fatigue mats



Environment: Assistive Technology

The National AgrAbility Project maintains a database of farm and ranch related assistive technology products and manufacturers on their web site: <http://www.agrabilityproject.org>

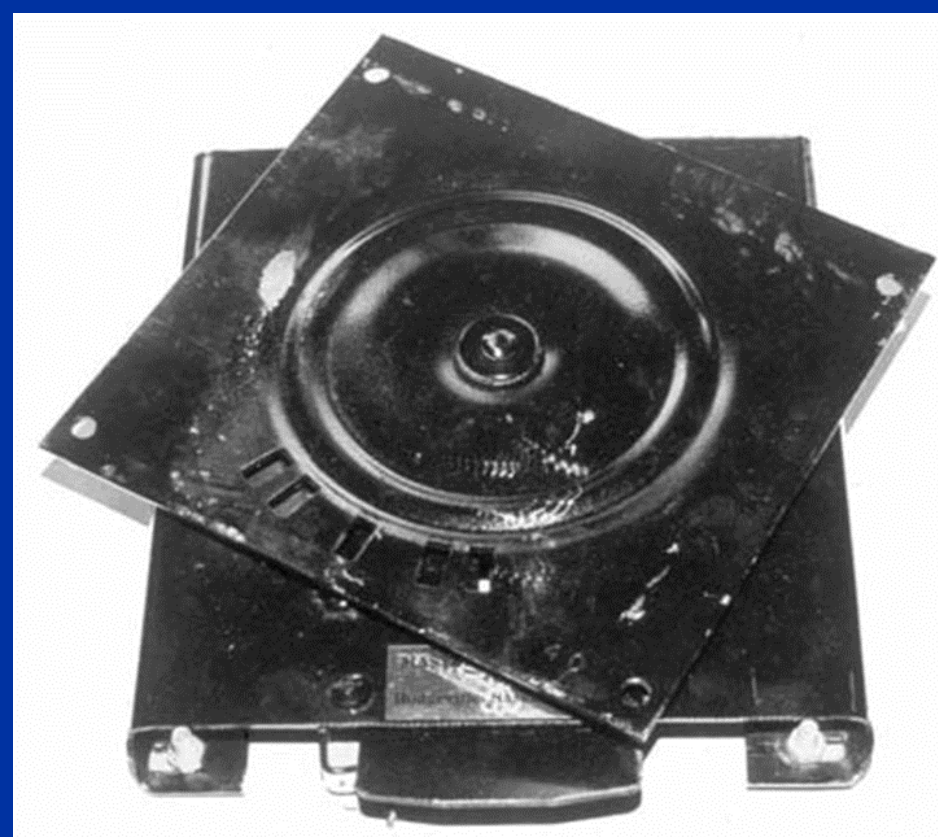
Assistive technology products are grouped into the following categories:

- Agriculture-related enterprises
- Fencing
- Home modifications
- Independent living
- Livestock handling and housing
- Materials handling
- Outdoor mobility
- Outdoor recreation
- Secondary injury/illness prevention
- Shop and shop tools
- Tractors and self-propelled equipment
- Vehicle modifications





Examples





Examples



Bottom Line

- Older farmers are going to farm
- Older adults may turn to agriculture as a hobby as they age
- Key is to do what you love in as safe and efficient a way as possible
- Taking care of your own health is crucial
- Making use of the many adaptive pieces of equipment (large and small) that exist
- Be safe, don't over do, make your environment as supportive as possible, adapt what you do and how you do it as your ability changes.

