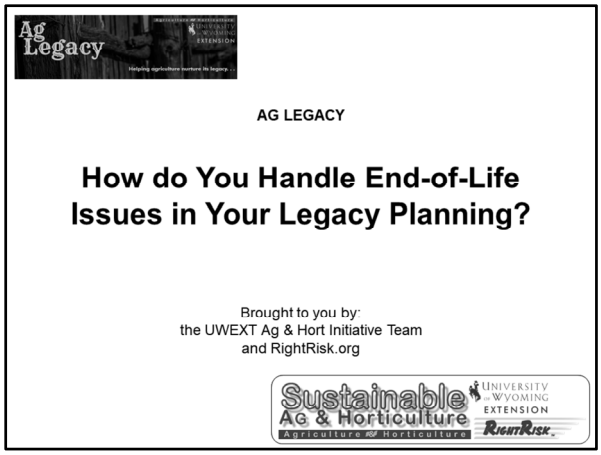


Welcome to another AG LEGACY recording.

AG LEGACY is a series of presentations and other online materials intended to assist rural families
in creating their own legacy by beginning the thought process and opening the lines of communication.

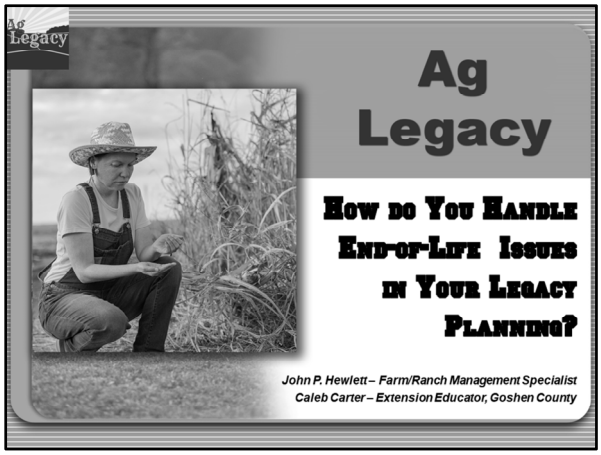
Today's recording will address the question: How do You Handle End-of-Life Issues in Your Legacy Planning?

Today's Speaker

John P. Hewlett
Ranch/Farm Management Specialist,
Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics,
University of Wyoming

I'm John Hewlett, a Ranch and Farm Management Specialist in the Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming

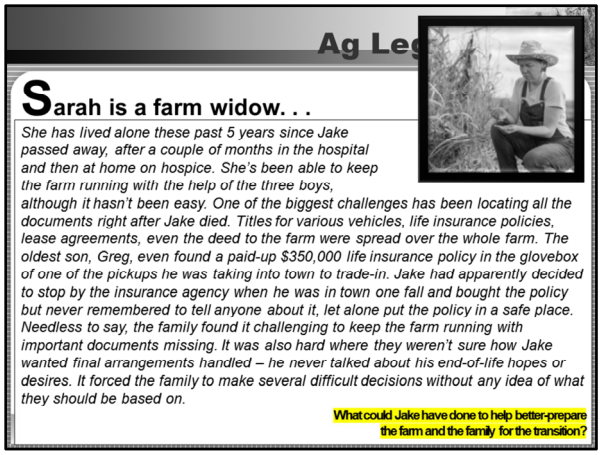
I will be your speaker for today's AG LEGACY presentation.



Getting a handle on end-of-life issues can present many challenges in the modern world we live in. Choices previously not available now make facing the end increasingly complex.

There are steps we can all take to prepare, however. These steps and our efforts to get organized become part of the legacy we leave behind.

What is involved and where do we start?



Sarah is a farm widow. . .

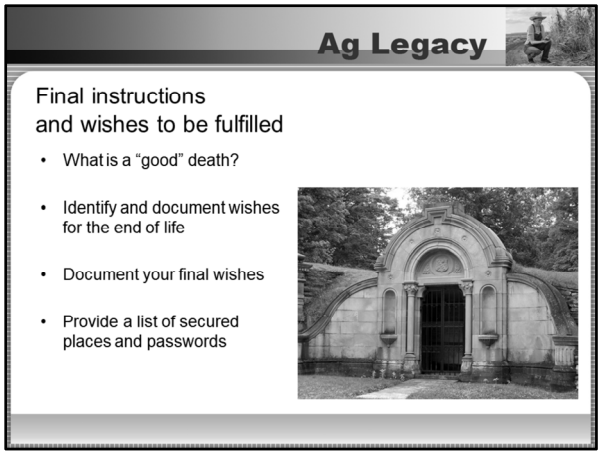
She has lived alone these past 5 years since Jake passed away, after a couple of months in the hospital and then at home on hospice. She's been able to keep the farm running with the help of the three boys, although it hasn't been easy. One of the biggest challenges has been locating all the documents right after Jake died. Titles for various vehicles, life insurance policies, lease agreements, even the deed to the farm were spread over the whole farm.

The oldest son, Greg, even found a paid-up $350,000 life insurance policy in the glovebox of one of the pickups he was taking into town to trade-in. Jake had apparently decided to stop by the insurance agency when he was in town one fall and bought the policy but never remembered to tell anyone about it, let alone put the policy in a safe place. Needless to say, the family found it challenging to keep the farm running with important documents missing. It was also hard where they weren't sure how Jake wanted final arrangements handled – he never talked about his end-of-life hopes or desires. It forced the family to make several difficult decisions without any idea of what they should be based on.

What could Jake have done to help better-prepare the farm and the family for the transition?

Planning an Ag Legacy should include discussion of all five components of a true legacy: values and life lessons, personal possessions of emotional value, fulfilling final wishes and instructions, ownership of financial assets and real estate, and management succession.

If the discussions between generations do not cover all five components of a legacy, the legacy transfer will not be completed successfully.



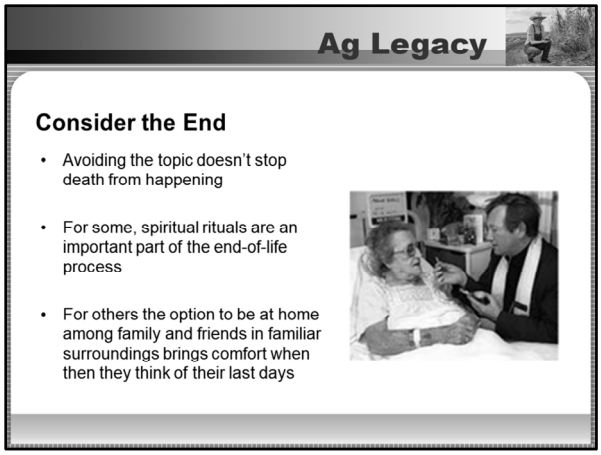
Final instructions and wishes to be fulfilled can be extremely detailed or very general:

The first step is to decide what a "good" death looks like to you.

The second step is to identify and document wishes for the end of life: where to live, where to die, what level of medical care is desired, and who should care for dependents.

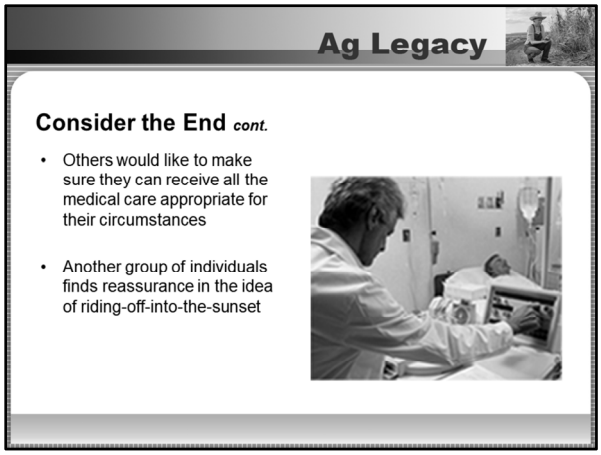
The third step is to document your final wishes – those things relating to burial and memorial.

In today's world, step four, to provide a list of secured places and passwords, is also extremely important.



Death is a natural part of life - for most of us, talking about it isn't. Most people are uncomfortable talking, or even thinking, about what will happen when they or a loved one dies. Avoiding the topic doesn't stop death from happening.

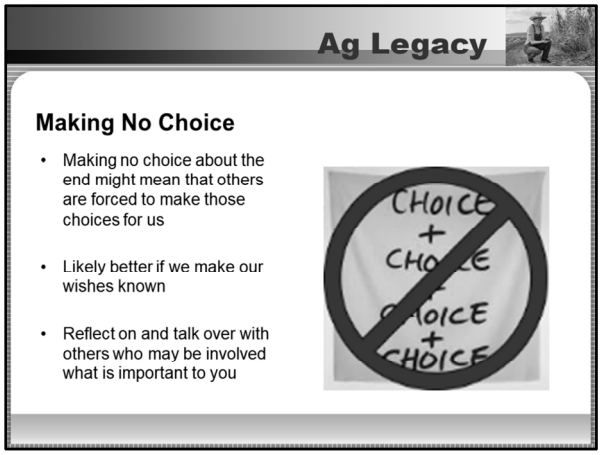
For some, spiritual rituals are an important part of the end-of-life process, perhaps including a spiritual advisor or other counselors. For others the option to be at home among family and friends in familiar surroundings brings comfort when then they think of their last days.



Others would like to make sure that they receive all the medical care appropriate for their circumstances. Knowing that staff will be available around the clock and that appropriate medication can be provided offers comfort.

Another group of individuals find reassurance in the idea that they get their final affairs in order, pack their bag and ride-off-into-the-sunset. They don't want to burden family or friends with their passing and prefer to make that last journey on their own.

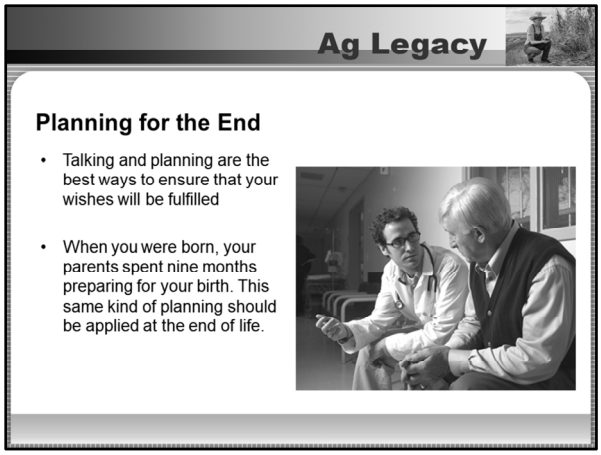
The point here is that there is no one, correct way to look at the end of life. Nor is there only a single alternative open to most of us. Often we have a number of choices and options to consider.



Of course, making no choice about the end might mean that others are forced to make those choices for us.

It is likely better if we at least make our wishes known to them, that way they can help to make sure our wishes are honored when the time comes.

It is not so critical to actually define a “good” death, as it is to reflect on and talk over with others who may be involved what is important to you.

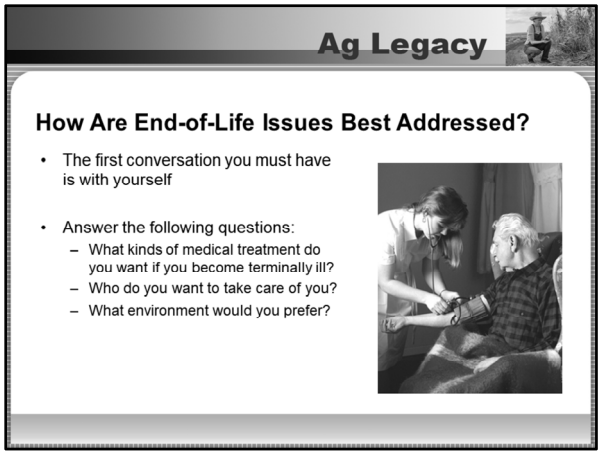


Talking and planning are the best ways to ensure that your wishes will be fulfilled. These discussions may help you to live your life to the fullest – the way you want – right up to the end.

That's why planning for your death is so important to your well-being and your loved ones' peace of mind. When you were born, your parents spent nine months preparing for your birth. This same kind of planning should be applied at the end of life.

It is also valuable and important to talk with other people about your end-of-life decisions. You may find it useful to reflect with:

- Family members,
- Close friends,
- A spiritual advisor (Priest, Pastor, Rabbi, Shaman),
- Health care providers, or
- Others important to you.

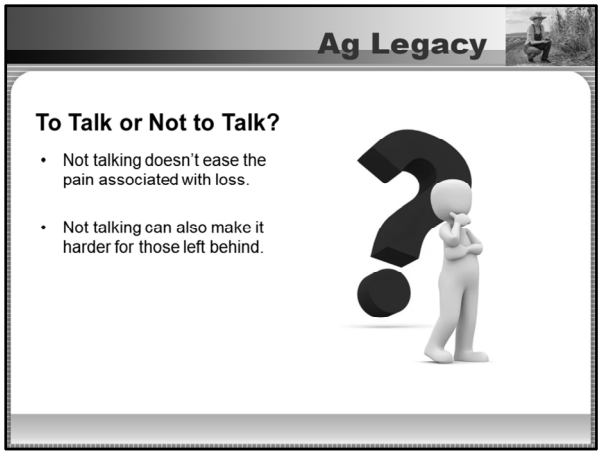


While we don't have absolute control over how we will die, we may want to inform others of our preferences related to death.

The first conversation you must have is with yourself.

Explore your answers to the following questions:

- What kinds of medical treatment do you want if you become terminally ill?
- Who do you want to take care of you?
- What environment would you prefer?



Not talking doesn't ease the pain associated with loss.

Many people avoid talking about end-of-life because of their fears about: suffering, pain, separation from loved ones and the unknown.

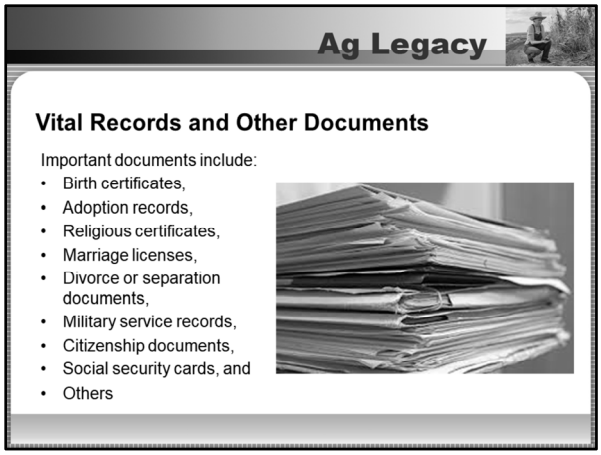
These fears keep them from dealing with life's final lesson and make it harder to plan their lives as they wish.

Not talking can also make it harder for those left behind.

Once you have decided on what you want, use an advance directive to document your wishes.

Advance directives are formal documents that explicitly describe your wishes for care near the end, including:

- Medical/health care directives
- Living wills
- Powers of attorney
- Wills
- Estate plans



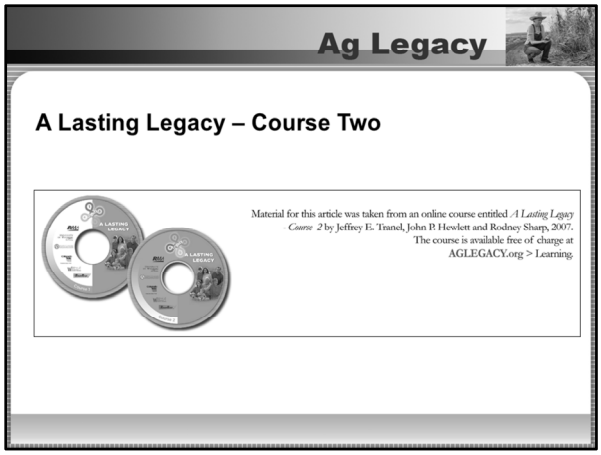
A number of vital records may be needed to execute your final wishes. It is often easier for you to locate or obtain missing documents than it will be for your family members or your executor.

Many of the forms needed to replace lost or damaged certificates and other records are available on the Internet.

Important documents include: birth certificates, adoption records, religious certificates, marriage licenses, divorce or separation documents, military service records, citizenship documents, and social security cards, among others.

Planning for pre-death issues and possibilities before the time actually comes will free both you and your loved ones to spend time doing the things that are really important during your last days.

Other considerations and issues you may want to address, include: life-sustaining treatments, where to spend your last days, care of dependents - minor children, an elderly parent, or relatives, foster children or adults, or possibly a disabled friend or family member, and care of animals, either pets or livestock in your care.

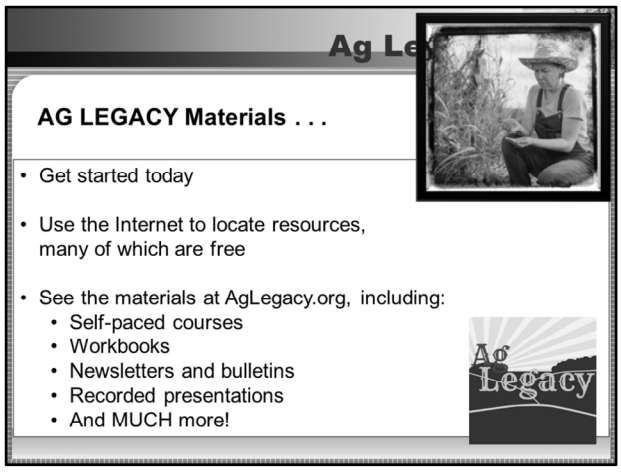


We will all leave a legacy whether we plan to or not.

You might want consider addressing your end-of-life issues now, as part of creating your legacy for the next generation.

Portions of this article are taken from an online course entitled A Lasting Legacy - Course 2.

The course is available free of charge at AGLEGACY.org under the Learning tab.



AG LEGACY can help, materials are available. . .

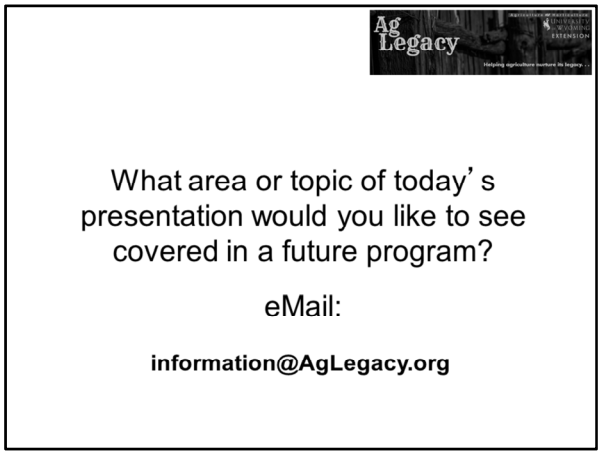
- We recommend you get started making positive steps toward your Legacy today!

- Use the Internet to locate additional resources if needed | Many are available free of charge

- Also, see the materials at AgLegacy.org, including:
  - Self-paced courses, Workbooks, Newsletters and bulletins, Recorded presentations
  - And MUCH more!

Keep in mind, it is never too late to get started.

Plan to take a step or two and get things rolling soon..

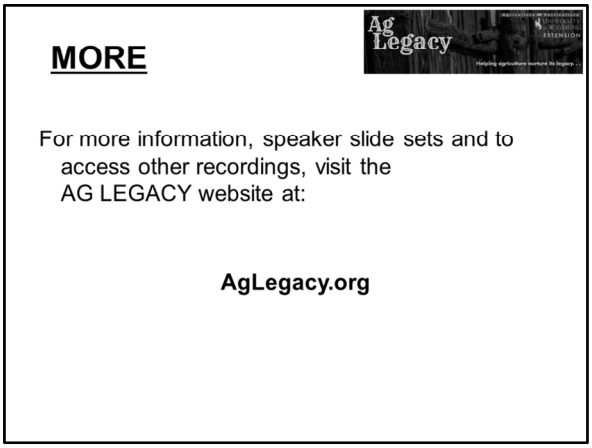


We would like to hear from you about topics or presentations you would like to see offered in the future.

Please consider sending an email to information@AgLegacy.org

OR

Visit AGLEGACY.org for more information



In closing, let me extend my thanks to our AG LEGACY team for making this series possible.

We would also like to thank you, our viewers, for taking time to view this AGLEGACY recording. We sincerely hope that you find today's content of value in your work.

We hope to see you again in one of our upcoming programs. Until then, we offer you our sincerest hope for success in creating an AG LEGACY for yourself and your family.

…..For AG LEGACY… I'm John Hewlett