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Farm leaders share COVID vaccination experiences

By Stephanie Leonard
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Photo from Wikimedia Commons

By Stephanie Leonard

With the pandemic as the leading health challenge affecting everyone for the foreseeable future, I'm sharing some experiences on vaccination.

I've just completed two doses of the Moderna vaccine. (Some call it the "Dolly Parton" vaccine because of the \$1 million Dolly contributed toward its research and development.)





Stephanie Leonard

When vaccines opened to my risk group, I expected a wait. On a friend's recommendation, I called the little pharmacy in Wellman, 15 miles away. Four days later, I was in their chair. Their staff was friendly and professional, the process was private and efficient. I felt only a little poke. I was out the door 20 minutes later, after the 15-minute observation period. That night and the next day, my left arm was a little stiff and tender. That was it.

The second dose I named "the stealth whammy." I didn't even feel the needle and wondered for a moment if the gal had "missed" — an absurd thought!

Later, the stiff arm was back, a nice

reassurance. By bedtime, a little headache came on. The next day, I awoke with aches and chills and realized what fatigue feels like. I spent the day at home with blankets and a couple naps but didn't take any meds.

I felt lousy, yet I was happy to tell myself "tomorrow I'll feel better." And I was right. It was strange magic to have side effects disappear overnight.

My side effects were less miserable than nasty flu bouts I've had. And I recognize the potential outcomes of COVID as more serious and severe than the flu. So, getting vaccinated and feeling punk for a day was an easy choice compared to the risk of serious illness and the thought I could infect someone else.

I asked a few other Iowans about their takes and experiences on vaccination. Here's what they shared.

Nyle Kauffman

**Retired physician and farmer,
Johnson County, Iowa:**

I've been vaccinated. I had two doses of the Moderna vaccine. The first dose made me feel a little achy and tired the next day. I had no other side effects.

The second dose had a similar effect that was a little more intense, but I still didn't have to stay in bed.

My experience as a doctor has taught me that we now live in a world free of smallpox, very little polio and no diphtheria or tetanus. Our world has these freedoms because of vaccines and because of people getting them.



Nyle Kauffman

COVID has been our worst epidemic since the influenza pandemic of 1918 to 1920. Masking and social distancing have worked in decreasing our risk, but the next step is vaccination, which I was glad to receive. It's fascinating to see a marked decrease in influenza cases this past winter which means our social distancing and masking have worked in decreasing the spread of infectious disease. COVID virus would have been a lot worse if we hadn't done that.

My getting vaccinated not only helps me but the people around me because I will be less likely to infect them. I value being part of a healthy community.

Justin Brown

**DVM, Assistant Teaching Professor, Iowa State University Swine Medicine
Education Center, Ames:**

I understand that getting vaccinated is a personal decision, but I chose to get vaccinated to help protect my family and friends and due to my personal health. As a type 1 diabetic, I'm in a higher risk category to become severely ill from COVID-19, and I want to do my part to protect myself and others around me. I'm only one person, but by getting vaccinated, that's one more person towards achieving herd immunity and one step toward getting back to normal.



Justin Brown

As a veterinarian, vaccinations play a significant role in helping to keep animals healthy and minimizing the impact of diseases. Also, when we take the Veterinarian's Oath, we pledge to promote public health, and by taking and administering the COVID-19 vaccine, I am fulfilling that oath.

Jeff DeYoung

Editor, Iowa-Illinois-Missouri Farmer Today, Malvern, Iowa:

I'm set to get my first Pfizer shot April 30. I'm looking forward to getting the process started.

I got COVID in December, even though we were careful with masks and distancing. COVID lingered on for about two months, especially the shortness of breath and fatigue. The illness and fatigue were one side of it, and the uncertainty and worry about how it was going to evolve was another aspect.

The pandemic really hit home for me a year ago when my friend and favorite college professor died alone in a nursing home of COVID. Hundreds of us who loved him would have been there to say goodbye if we could, but he died alone. That shouldn't happen.

Mills County Public Health has done a great job keeping people informed about vaccines and appointment opportunities. I've done a lot of research and reading and talking to my medical professional friends. I'm looking forward to being fully vaccinated.



Jeff DeYoung

Hopefully as more people get vaccinated, life will return to something close to normal.

Curt Johnson

President/CEO of Cherokee State Bank, Cherokee, Iowa:



Curt Johnson

I did get vaccinated approximately five weeks ago with the one-dose J&J! Overall, I only experienced a sore left arm for three or four days, otherwise, no issues. Was not excited to hear about the J&J challenges with certain people; however, I believe we all recognize the virus and the vaccine affect everyone differently.

I get a sense we are seeing a strong percentage of people in our area that are getting the vaccine. I do not have a specific count for bank employees, however I would suggest it is north of 60%. Everyone has a reason for either getting the shot or not getting the shot, and it is important that we respect each person's decision.

Overall, I got vaccinated because it is the right thing to do for family, friends, co-workers and the community.

Vicar Holly Knouse

SS Peter and Paul Lutheran Church, Monticello, Iowa:

I was vaccinated in January. The first shot did not hurt, nor did I feel any side effects from it. It was a little crowded that day and I got a little frustrated with the wait. The second shot gave me a sore arm almost instantly, but my experience getting the shot was great. Jones County had a very efficient path set up the second time.

I woke up in the middle of the night and just didn't feel well. I had a low-grade fever and just wanted to sleep. What an amazing gift it was to just be able to sleep. I know my body was asking for rest and that second shot made it happen. I felt fine in almost 24 hours.

I wasn't sure I was going to get the vaccine at first. I felt that I was taking away something from someone who needed it more than me. When it was explained to me that I was indeed helping those people that I thought needed it more than me by receiving the shot, it made more sense.

Both those in my congregation at SS Peter and Paul and I feel more comfortable visiting in their homes, the hospital, the nursing homes, and in our church building.

The facts that influenced me are these:

The vaccines approved in the U.S. were developed by medical experts and pharmaceutical companies cooperating globally and through rigorous evaluation. Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines themselves are new, but scientists have been working on the technology going into them for 20 years.



Vicar Holly Knouse

Thousands of people participated in vaccine clinical trials that were approved by a safety board and overseen by the FDA every step of the way.

The vaccines are safe: the risk of a severe side effect is less than 0.5%, and everyone is observed for signs of a rare allergic reaction that is treatable. Mild side effects are normal, signs that the body is building protection, and most resolve within a few days. Medical experts continue collecting data to ensure that the long-term effects are safe.

The vaccines are up to 95% effective, much higher than the annual flu vaccines. Among those receiving the vaccine in clinical trials, no one was hospitalized or died due to COVID after vaccine protection set in.

In short, vaccines are the most effective tools available to protect us, our families and friends, and to end the pandemic and get back to the normal life we enjoy.

But I should advise you of these lingering side effects I've experienced after vaccination: a feeling of gratitude and sense of relief and optimism about us being able to get there.

Stephanie Leonard, Riverside, Iowa, is an occupational safety manager at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.
