

## Media Release

# Biosecurity disaster – are we at risk?

*Australia's real biosecurity nightmare, a disease outbreak in flocks that has the potential to spread to humans!*

*This hypothetical scenario will be explored by the nation's foremost agricultural and health identities at the 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial National Centre for Farmer Health conference.*

*The panel includes National Farmers Federation president Jock Laurie, National Institute for Rural and Regional Australia (Australian National University) director Dr Anthony Hogan, Queensland Rural Medical Education medical director Professor Scott Kitchener, rural media and communications guru Esther Price, high-profile Tasmanian diverse farmer Rob Henry and agri-professional consultant Cathy McGowan AO. It will be hosted by lawyer and farmer Jamie Fisher.*

***Register now!***

**[www.farmerhealth.org.au/conference2012/registration-fees](http://www.farmerhealth.org.au/conference2012/registration-fees)**

A disease outbreak in the national flock - Australia's real biosecurity nightmare - will be explored and assessed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial National Centre for Farmer Health conference.

The 3-day 'Sowing the Seeds of Farmer Health' conference will be in Hamilton, Victoria, from September 17-19 and engages health and agri-professionals, policy makers and academics in issues relating to health, wellbeing and safety of farmers, agricultural workers and their families.

A new and exciting addition to the conference program this year is the Hypothetical 'Biosecurity Outbreak in "Sheeptown"!' taking place on Monday 17th September. This event brings together some of the nation's foremost agricultural identities to deal with the frightening "what if" scenario of a disease hitting sheep and spilling over to humans. Remember diseases that spread from animals account for 70% of new infectious diseases globally.

NCFH director Associate Clinical Professor Susan Brumby says the hypothetical has been introduced to present an entertaining, lively and informed discussion on a serious but hypothetical issue affecting the health, well-being and safety of the farming community.

"While the scenario is purely hypothetical, its panellists will be responding by drawing on their extensive industry knowledge and expertise," Susan says.

"They will also take into account social, environmental, financial and political factors facing the general community, with the host shaping the hypothetical 'discussion forum' and directing questions to individual panel members," she says.

"Biosecurity is fast becoming the major issue for the agricultural industry as our long-held quarantine barriers are freed up despite the objections and increasing international travel continues to grow."

Host, Jamie Fisher was born and bred on a soldier-settlement block outside Geelong. He went on to become a partner at Harwood Andrews, one of Melbourne's most prestigious law firms, before returning to the land on a NSW property.

Like all farmers he struggled through years of drought, and returned to bush town law to keep his property afloat. For him the risk of a biosecurity threat is all too real.

"When a scourge confronts humankind, where will you be?" Jamie says.

"When humankind is threatened, is the measure of an advanced western society determined by how it governs itself effectively, or how it sticks to its principles and dies?" he says.

"Are you an Australian who can stare oblivion in the eye and fight, or stare it in the eye and crumple? Is oblivion a better choice than a failure of integrity, and is saving yourself, not also, a measure of integrity?"

"These are the big questions and we will be raising them to get the answers."

NCFH event coordinator Felicity Little says it has been encouraging to see registrations rolling in for 'Sowing the Seeds of Farmer Health'.

Felicity says the Centre anticipates conference delegates to leave educated on issues relating to farmer health, wellbeing and safety - and highly entertained.

"We have fantastic representation on the hypothetical panel and we welcome farmers, agri-professionals, health experts and the general community to come to Hamilton to be entertained and inspired by experts in the field," Felicity says.

"Full conference details and tickets to the hypothetical are available at [www.farmerhealth.org.au](http://www.farmerhealth.org.au)"

The hypothetical has been kindly sponsored by Bendigo Radiology.

**For more information please contact National Centre for Farmer Health on (03) 5551 8533**

**Website: [www.farmerhealth.org.au](http://www.farmerhealth.org.au)**