

Working together, get sick together

Q Fever, equine flu, leptospirosis, cross staph infections, needle jabs – it's a litany of life threatening danger for farmers working closely with animals.

Clearly there are more risks for farmers working with animals than simple impact injuries such as having a cow or horse step on their feet or a ram smack its horns into their knees.

And they are all on the agenda of the inaugural National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) conference in Hamilton, Victoria, from October 11-13.

NCFH Director Clinical

Associate Professor Sue Brumby said farmer injuries from needle stick incidents while vaccinating livestock have required

extensive surgical repair or amputation, and have caused miscarriage and even death.

"Giving injections is part of livestock farming but needle stick incidences from livestock injections are very common, with more than 80 per cent of farmers and vets reporting a needle stick incident in the previous year," she said.

David Champness, Principal Veterinary Officer of

the Victorian Department of Primary Industries will address zoonotic diseases such as Q fever and leptospirosis.

Professor Brumby said sudden outbreaks of livestock disease incidents such as anthrax, equine influenza or more insidious endemic diseases such as ovine Johne's disease in sheep, or bovine Johne's disease in dairy and beef cattle herds, attack a farming business on a number of levels.

"They impact not only on the health and welfare of livestock, but the financial return for the farming busi-

ness. Which in turn boosts anxiety and stress levels of farmers." she said.

The NCFH conference will deliver grass-roots health, wellbeing and safety education, areas which are going to become more, not less, important in the years ahead as the pressure on farmers to boost production increases.

The NCFH conference will be held in the Hamilton Performing Arts Centre on October 11, 12, 13. Further details are available from www.farmerhealth.org.au or by contacting Sally Stevenson on 0355 518 533.