



National Centre for Farmer Health shares expertise with dairy colleagues

The National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) was recently invited to attend a Dairy Research Symposium held by the University of Sydney's Faculty of Veterinary Science. The symposium 'A healthy obsession – looking at the fitness of our cows, farms and farmers', was held in Camden, New South Wales and was attended by Australian dairy farmers, veterinarians and researchers.

The NCFH attended the event to raise the profile of personal health and wellbeing and its impact on individuals and the wider dairy industry. On the first day of the symposium, the NCFH team highlighted the health of farm men and women in Australia, which stimulated a flurry of delegates arriving early the following morning for a health check. Delegates were provided with individual feedback on body mass index (BMI), eyesight, blood pressure, fasting glucose, cholesterol levels and stress levels, as well as the latest research on the health of the agricultural workforce in Australia.

'It seems our message that a healthy farmer is required to run a healthy and profitable farm is beginning to sink in,' said Deakin lecturer Dr Scott McCoombe after almost half of the conference delegates opted to fast overnight, get up early and take the opportunity to find out a little more about their own health status. 'We were very encouraged by the participants taking onboard our message and showing the initiative to monitor and improve their own health' he added.



NCFH's Dr Ananda Chandrasekera undertaking a health check for University of Sydney symposium organiser Sherry Catt.

The NCFH team collated the results of the health check and reported them as the final presentation of the symposium. National Centre for Farmer Health Director, Clinical Associate Professor Susan Brumby said 'The results definitely raised some eyebrows, with over 60 per cent of those tested classified as overweight and nearly 30 per cent as obese according to their BMI measurements.' Additionally,

psychological distress measured using the self reported Kessler K10 survey showed that 51 per cent of the tested delegates reported moderate to high levels of distress. 'Importantly the key message of the symposium – a 'healthy obsession' – was reinforced as applying equally to humans, cows and pastures', she added.