

We want you!

To be safe and healthy on your farm

AgriSafe clinics, now at the National Centre for Farmer Health in Hamilton, are the local key to farmers and farming families being healthy, happy and safe on their farms.

AgriSafe provides not one, but two, agricultural practice clinicians to deliver an effective and essential grass roots service throughout the Green Triangle.

Elizabeth Lawrence and Rachel Verschuren are both Registered Nurses who have completed post graduate studies in agricultural health and medicine.

NCFH director Sue Brumby says Elizabeth and Rachel have a strong interest in providing health services to farmers, farm employees, agricultural workers and their families.

Associate clinical professor Brumby says AgriSafe clinics provide “a vital service to our farming community; and their sole purpose is to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of those who work in agriculture”.

“The first AgriSafe clinic in Hamilton only opened in February but in that short time has had a significant impact, revealing numerous previously undiagnosed health conditions,” professor Brumby says.

“The clinics have also highlighted the poor understanding of appropriate protective equipment usage in common agricultural settings,” she says.

“In light of these findings, AgriSafe clinics provide an important pathway into improving the health of our agricultural communities by referring patients for previously undiscovered health concerns including elevated blood sugar levels, financial counselling and sleep apnoea.”

Wannon-based Murray Grey producers Anne and Des Slattery say they are glad they completed an AgriSafe check.

Anne says it is something she would encourage every farming family to get involved with.

“We thought we had everything pretty well covered on our farm, both health and safety, but our time with Elizabeth Lawrence showed us there were things we could be doing better,” she says.

“She showed us new products we could be using where farm chemicals are concerned, and gave us a pre-pesticide use blood check and we will be going back straight after spraying for a follow-up.

“We are all responsible for our own health but having access to these lengthy, and professional, consultations is a valuable opportunity.”

Elizabeth Lawrence says AgriSafe welcomes appointments from anyone working in the agricultural sector.

She says there is increasing evidence agricultural workers experience poor health outcomes, with elevated rates of cancer, suicide, cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes and mental illness.

“Compounded by limited access to clinical services,” Elizabeth says.

“Which is why we are here and what makes us such a valuable resource to farming families and workers in western Victoria and South-East SA in particular,” she says.

“We are close, appointments are easily booked and we have a lot of experience in working with the agricultural industry and identifying its unique demands.

“Agriculture is an industry which is consistently ranked as one of the top three most-hazardous in Australia, accounting for more than 15 pc of workplace fatalities.

“Until recently, there was a nationwide lack of health clinics specifically targeting the health, safety and well-being of the Australian agricultural workforce.

“NCFH recognised this health provision gap and established the first AgriSafe Australia clinic.

“This novel initiative provides a broad level of care encompassing the provision of comprehensive health assessments, mask and respirator fit testing, pesticide exposure testing, personal protective equipment advice, community education and health promotion.”

To make an AgriSafe appointment for a comprehensive agricultural health check simply call the National Centre for Farmer Health on 55518533.

The AgriSafe clinic operates out of the National Centre for Farmer Health, part of Western District Health Service. The AgriSafe clinic is in Mackellar House on the hospital grounds, with easy access via Tyres St.

The AgriSafe clinic is staffed by agricultural clinicians every day, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

**Further details are available from The National Centre for Farmer’s Health on 03 5551 8533
or www.farmerhealth.org.au**