

Awareness sustains healthy living

ANDREW ROGERS

BERRIMAL farmer Stephen Poole wants curriculum writers to get serious about nutrition education programs.

Mr Poole participated in the Sustainable Farm Families program at Wedderburn, which concluded last week.

He told *The Loddon Times* that the program needs to be replicated at schools as early and as soon as possible to tackle major public health issues such as diabetes and obesity.

A three-year program, Sustainable Farm Families was designed to help farmers improve all aspects of their health.

A major component is nutrition awareness. The program has been run by Western District Health Service in partnership with Victorian Farmers Federation, the Department of Primary Industries and other health services.

It has been conducted right across Victoria.

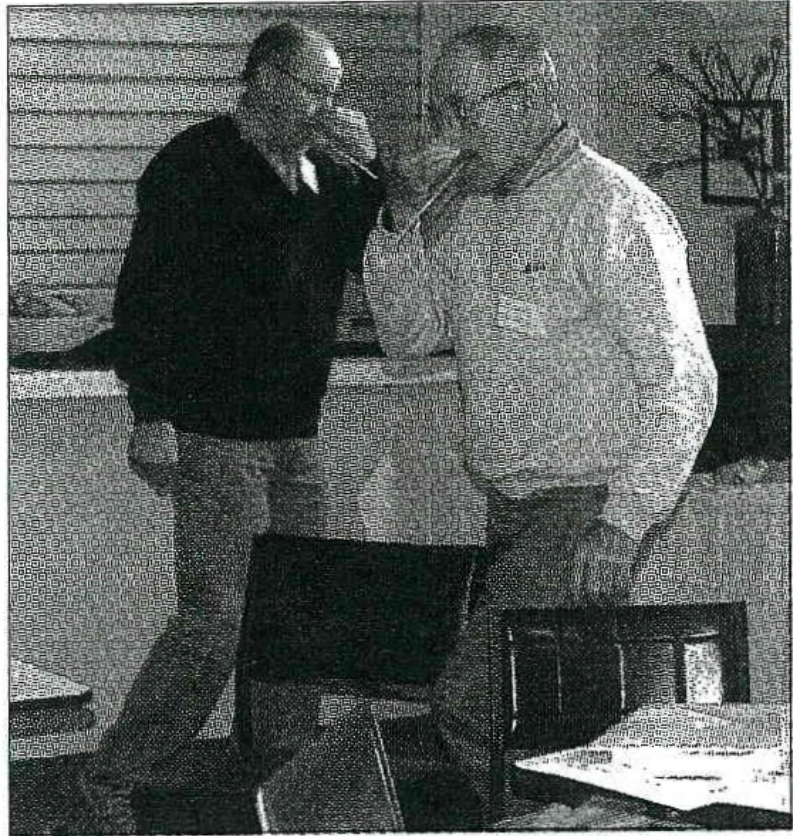
Mr Poole said the program has produced some "fantastic data" for Government use.

"It's really important the data is used to develop education programs for the next generation so as these (nutritional mistakes) are not repeated," he said.

"Curriculum writers need to get serious about teaching what to eat and how to eat."

Mr Poole said a perfect example of the good work that could be done was at Wedderburn College.

"Their gardening



Participants in the Sustainable Farm Families program at Wedderburn received a first-hand insight into suffering asthma last week by holding their nose and breathing only through a straw as they walked around the room for a full minute.

program is great!" he said.

"They're teaching kids what the foods are, how they can grow them and how to prepare them."

Nine farmers from Wedderburn and surrounding districts attended the final program of the course at the town's community house last Thursday.

Sessions were hosted by Inglewood and Districts Health Service community health nurse Rebekah Barnfield, IDHS nurse Jenny Boromeo and Western District Health Service's Adam Taylor.

Mr Poole said the course was worthwhile.

"I think it's created an enormous awareness among farmers about the status of our health and how we can improve it,"

Mr Poole said.

In good health, Mr Poole nonetheless felt his nutrition could be improved.

The family now grows its own fruit and vegetables.

Mr Poole said the garden had a three-fold benefit to the family.

"We're eating better food, we're getting increased exercise in the garden and we're spending time together as a family," he said.

Mr Poole said many SFF participants had committed to spending more time with their families as a result of the program.

"Nearly all of us have planned more holidays and time with family away from the farm, which reduces stress levels," he said.