

# How healthy are farmers?

By Alice Plate

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A group of rural medical professionals testing farmer's health has revealed more than 80 per cent of their subjects had to be referred on to a doctor. The results have come from a two-day health workshop called Sustainable Farming Families, which has been developed by the western districts health service in Victoria. Over the past three years the program has educated more than 200 farmers in dairy, cotton and broadacre areas across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria - about their health. John Martin, director of the Centre for Sustainable Communities at La Trobe University in Bendigo explained how the course worked. "The course is really based on a process of actively working with farmers to understand what their current level of knowledge about [their] health and well-being."

**In this report:** Stuart Wilder, nurse, Western Districts Health Service in Victoria; Sue Brumby, program founder, Sustainable Farming Families; Western Districts Health Service in Victoria; John Martin, director of the Centre for sustainable communities, La Trobe University in Bendigo; Joe Seiss, cotton grower from Macalister; Colin Underwood, cotton grower from south of Dalby.