

# Farming not good for health

**Samantha Townsend**

WORKING on the land and breathing fresh air is good for the body and soul — or so it would seem.

But new research into the health of farmers has found they were worse off than their city counterparts, with many rural residents' areas suffering obesity and high blood pressure.

Ten years of crippling drought and the stress related to it has been blamed for the poor health of farmers.

The National Centre for Farmer Health's research into the health of farming families, as part of its sustainability farm family program, also found overall alcohol consumption was higher than those in the city while smoking rates were lower.

The figures showed about 30 to 35 per cent of farmers had complained of moderate to severe pain including lower back and "stuffed" knees.

"It's surprising until you think about it," spokeswoman Susan Brumby said. "The changes on the land that are occurring due to drought have really taken a toll on their health as farmers switch from livestock to other production."

Instead of being on a horse, Ms Brumby said farmers were now mostly on tractors or 4WD bikes so their level of exercise had decreased.