

In a good paddock

Farmers overweight through lack of manual labour

THEY'RE supposed to be big, strong and healthy but a new study has found farmers are overweight and stressed partly because they're not doing enough manual labour.

The National Centre for Farmer Health study also has found farmers are less healthy than the average Australian.

Centre director, Associate Professor Susan Brumby, said 2000 farm men and women had been surveyed over a three-year period to deter-



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mine their overall health.

"We're seeing farm people become much more sedentary when it comes to their work because of advances in technology," she said.

"They don't need to be as active as they once were.

That often comes as a big surprise to people who have an image of farm men and women as strong, healthy and robust.

"And what we found is on the whole, people living in metropolitan areas have a longer life expectancy than people in rural areas."

She also said high stress levels from years of drought, and limited access to health care all contributed to the bleak picture of rural health. What we've been saying is we

don't think the health of our farmers is as good as it could be," Prof Brumby said.

"Farmers are worried about the health of their herd or their pasture when their own health is not that great."

Kalangadoo sheep and cattle farmer Kent Martin agreed that while technology had made a farmers' life easier it also had a detrimental affect on health.

"I remember being out there sweating like a dog, throwing bales of hay around

but geez we were fit," he said.

"Now you don't even have to get out and unhook the trailer. Everything is automatic. I remember my Dad and my uncles all being fit as they got older, but I'm definitely not."

SA Farmers Federation president Peter White said the lifestyle of the average farmer had changed significantly in recent years. "Probably the worst thing is the stress levels," he said.

"And from stress comes

other health problems, including mental health issues.

"And we're our own worst enemies because despite the constant nagging from our wives, you just can't get us to see a doctor regularly."