

Sustainable Farm Families

Two successful 2 day health awareness workshops held in Tennant Creek and Katherine, drew station managers, wives and staff from the Barkly/ Tennant Creek region in November 2006.

The Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) project was brought to the region by the Department of Health and Ageing and Western District Health Service (Hamilton Vic), the initiator of SFF.

The SFF program has provided a wonderful opportunity for pastoral families in the Barkly region to take positive action about their health. All participants were given a health check and participated in the two full days of workshop. Topics included the state of rural health, cardiovascular disease, cancer, farm health and safety, stress, gender specific health issues and a supermarket tour. All participants were also given the opportunity of a one on one assessment, where they could go through and discuss their results. It gave pastoralists the knowledge of how to apply what they learned, to improve their health, well being and safety.

The Federal Government has supported the 2 year pilot program for remote Australia, funding SFF workshops in the NT, Queensland, NSW and WA.

SFF was developed by farmers, health services, universities and farm industry groups as a response to higher illness and premature death rates in farming families. Ms Brumby the program coordinator from Western District Health Service said *"The good health of a pastoralist and pastoralist family is the single most important investment that an agriculture business can have. Understanding its vital role to you, your family and your business is important and makes good sense."*

SFF was initially piloted with broadacre farming families in south eastern Australia. Other agricultural industries recognised its positive impact on farmer health and attitudes to health and farm health and safety, resulting in SFF in the dairy, sugar and cotton industries. So far there have been nearly 500 farm, pastoral family members and individuals who have participated in the program, and 100 % have said they would recommend SFF to other pastoral or farming families.

Ms Brumby also commented on the distances and commitment the Barkly people put into attending and participating in the program and look forward to returning next year.

For more info: www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au

Cindy, Anna and I attended this health workshop with other Barkly station managers and their wives from Brunette, Walhallow, Campfield, Helen Springs, Rockhampton Downs, Murray Downs and Benmarra. It was disappointing that due to the pressures of work Ross and Jay were not able to be there because this workshop was so very valuable. In our world the opportunity to take the time to consider and focus on our personal health needs is rare, and to benefit from professional medical advice and support in a friendly, relaxed and comfortable environment is unprecedented.

The follow-up from the Sustainable Farm Families team has been very motivating and encouraging, and as a result of this workshop, Cindy, Anna and I have all made positive changes towards a more active and healthy lifestyle. We look forward to the next workshop in November 2007 and hope that through this study, the health of working men, women and families on remote cattle stations is improved, because fit, healthy employees make good business sense.

PS: Ross didn't escape altogether – he did a Health Assessment & Evaluation with the Ford Health Group, Brisbane in February while we were on leave. Since then he has made a commitment to exercise at least 30 minutes a day.

Robyn Peatling - Alexandria

Alexandria Branding Champions

This is the group of people who stuck it out in 2006 to get 31000 calves branded - mainly all big weaners on Alexandria. It was a great effort. We had a few cool drinks on completion of the last day.

Ross Peatling - Alexandria



Back row (L to R). Joel Zeller, Stacey Garsed, Matt Fidock, Tim Blackburn, Col Summersell, John Elmes and Waz Peatling
Sitting on ground (L to R) Kristie McKechnie, yours truly (not too many calves branded by him!) and Brett Coggan.