

Farmers keep health in check via program

By Kathryn Roberts

Healthy farmers mean healthy farms and good productivity — that was the message at a workshop held last week, at which dairy farmers learned about rural health issues.

Sustainable Dairy Farming Families is a three-year project involving farmers from across Victoria which explores the link between the financial performance of a farm and the health of people on the farm.

Farmers attending the workshop learned about health issues such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and cholesterol and how to avoid these and keep healthy by exercising and eating well.

Each person attending the workshop had their cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes risk and weight measured.

They will meet during the next three years and be tested again to see whether what they learned had an effect on their health.

One of the organisers of the workshop Susan Brumby said it was important to teach farmers about health issues as healthy farmers usually meant better farms and bigger profits.

"Some men and women can put more money into the productivity of the cows, than they do themselves," Ms Brumby said.

"There's no point in having a better bottom line if you are not there to see it."

Men's health worker and workshop organiser Stuart Willder said it was important farmers break down their traditional tough exterior and learn to look after their health.

"What we are trying to do is relate it to farm productivity," Mr Willder said.

"If they don't have their health, they don't have their farm."

Retired farming couple Joy and Gordon Weller of Lockington attended the workshop and found it beneficial.

"I think no matter who you are and where you are, you need to know about health

and take control of your life," Mrs Weller said.

Mr Weller, who still manages a dairy farm, said it was good to see people of different ages at the workshop.

"There is a very interesting spread of ages, but you need a spread so you are getting the experienced as well as the expectant," Mr Weller said.

"There's a need to start young to look after your self."

The youngest farmer at the workshop, 23-year-old Brendan Ley of Cobram who is also studying an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture, said it was valuable to learn about health and how it affects the farm.

"It would be great if more people were aware of their health," Mr Ley said.

"It should be a top priority because if you're unhealthy things don't run as smoothly."

Another workshop will be held in Kerang on July 26 and 27.

Those interested in attending should phone Caroline Pearce at VFF on 1300 882 833 or email car Pearce@vff.org.au



Organisers . . . Stuart Willder and Susan Brumby.



Participants . . . Farmers Brendan Ley and Joy and Gordon Weller attended the workshop.