



Salisbury West resident Colleen Condliffe, left, Laanecoorie resident Leonie Baker and Salisbury West resident John Vanston workshop ideas on health management on day one of Sustainable Farm Families, an award-winning health management seminar.

Sustaining Loddon farm families

By ANDREW ROGERS

An award-winning health management seminar - aimed at men and women - was presented at Inglewood for the first time last week.

A two-day seminar, Sustainable Farm Families is designed to help farm families by delivering awareness and education workshops.

Farm families from across the Shire of Loddon converged on Inglewood and Districts Health Service for the program.

The project is the initiative of Hamilton-based Western Districts Health Service with the Department of Primary Industries being the main source of funding.

IDHS community health nurse Rebekah Barnfield helped to organise the day from the local end.

"The community is drought affected and it's brilliant to bring in a program that looks at all health issues," Ms Barnfield said.

Twenty-three farmers attended the session, which covered farm safety, cancer and stress.

Bridgewater farmer Allan Bunnett and Laanecoorie farmer Brian Baker spoke to The Loddon Times prior to the commencement of the first session.

Mr Bunnett said he was reasonably aware of health issues due to communications from the Victorian Farmers Federation, but that attending the seminar "couldn't hurt".

"It doesn't cost us anything so we might as well (attend)," he

said.

Mr Baker said rural health was an important issue.

During the first session, families were encouraged to have their say.

Jarklin farmer Christopher Wallace-Smith said taking up cricket again was really important to him.

"You use a ute or a motorbike (on the farm) and you're never walking or using your

legs," he said.

Wife Sarah said it was also good to get away from the farm from time to time.

WDHS program leader Adrian Calvano said SFF is delivered by the health-care provider in partnership with the DPI.

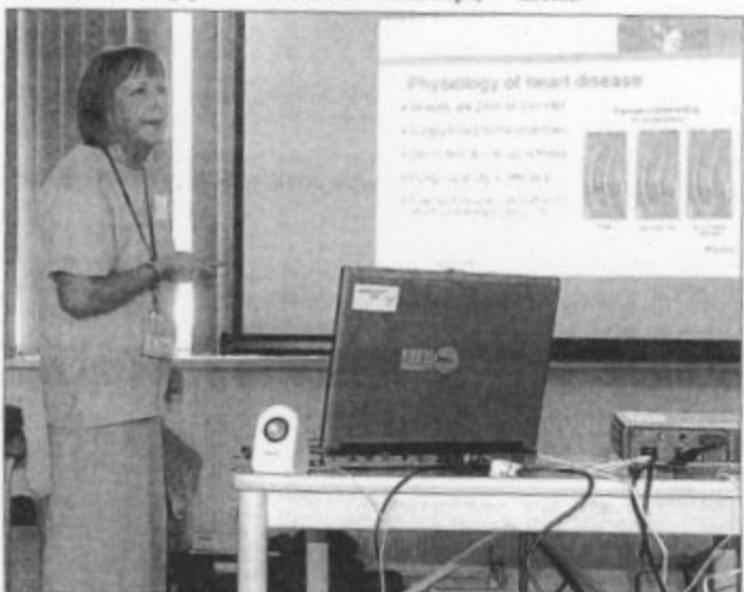
"It addresses the health, well being and safety issues facing farm families by providing health awareness and education workshops,"

he said.

DPI employee Erica Schelfhorst, who acted as a facilitator for the program, said the workshops were "definitely" worthwhile.

"Farmers learn a lot and they love the program," she said.

"They learn how to look after themselves and probably learn more than they would in 15 minutes with a doctor."



Inglewood District Health Service worker Anne Donaldson presenting ideas on better cardiovascular management.