



AgForce Queensland

ADVANCING RURAL QUEENSLAND



Healthy Queensland Awards Entry

Organization Name: AgForce Queensland

Local Government Area:

- Far North Queensland,
- North Queensland,
- Whitsunday – Isaac-Mackay,
- Central QLD,
- Western QLD,
- Wide Bay-Burnett,
- Darling Downs,
- South West QLD,
- Sunshine Coast,
- Brisbane,
- Inland South East QLD,
- Coastal South East QLD.

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Every Family Needs A **Farmer**

Healthy



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Healthy Farmers Program

1. Planning

The Healthy Farmers Program has evolved over the last few years as AgForce recognised the growing health pressures being faced by farmers. These pressures are a combination of an ageing workforce, the strain on the farming community dealing with drought and industry related challenges, the limitation of the rural health system and the individual farmer's belief that they shouldn't worry about their health.

We've all heard the heart wrenching stories of farms being decimated by drought, fires, flood, debt and plagues – but the hidden truth is that the health of the farmer causes even greater stress to the farming community according to Dr Toby Ford (CEO of Ford Health).

Following a keynote address to the AgForce State Conference, AgForce invited Dr Toby Ford, to work with the organisation to demystify the management of personal health. Discussions with Ford Health have resulted in an Australian first initiative – **The Healthy Farmers Program** and the development of the AgForce Health Index. By accessing Ford Health's extensive database of research and able to benchmark individual farmer's health against industry trends. But only the individual farmer and their nominated medical advisors will ever have access to their personal health information. This initiative is a first for the farming industry. However it is becoming standard practice for the business community.

The Healthy Farmers Program is about demystifying health for people on the land – simplifying the process - and helping them take ownership of their health destiny.

Key publications and events that assisted the process include:

The Healthy Farmers Program started with educational seminars, newsletter articles and internet base courses. Through the leadership of AgForce and its members in 2006, a health assessment pilot was launched. This pilot was the first of its kind in Australia and it revealed a real need to fill a gap in health service access for farmers across Australia. Since the development of the Healthy Farmers Program, farmers can utilise this health assessment to improve their own health.

AgForce and Ford Health have accessed the following reports in the research and development of the Healthy Farmers Program:

- 'Living Longer on the Land - A health program that works' - An economic evaluation of the Sustainable Farm Families Program, by Boymal, Rogers, Brumby & Willder, October 2007, RIRDC
- 'Living Longer on the Land – Sustainable Farm Families in Broadacre Agriculture' by Brumby, Wilson & Willder, May 2008, RIRDC
- 'Rural, regional & remote health; indications of health status & determinants of health', Australian Institute of Health & Water, March 2008
- Various reports through 'healthinsite', an Australian Government Initiative
- Reports from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health & Safety
- 'Collaborative partnerships for Farm Health & Safety' reports through Rural Industry Research & Development



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2. Implementing and monitoring

Following the 2006 AgForce Conference in Charleville where Dr Toby Ford addressed the delegates and presented a health and wellbeing workshop, AgForce in conjunction with Ford Health launched the Healthy Farmer Pilot Program in January 2007. In recognising some of the challenges regional and remote men and women have for health screening and prevention education, the service was designed to complete, in one visit, the full range of age and gender related health screenings. Additional to the assessment there was a stay-in-touch support program for one year.

This pilot was a unique health program that focused on preventative health through education, health assessment and interventions took place in a number of rural and regional locations in Queensland. As a result of its success the program was then rolled out across Queensland to a number of farming groups.

Findings from the data showed that the AgForce Queensland members who participated displayed some positive lifestyle behaviours in terms of physical activity and dietary intake. However, there are several areas of concern for this group. Areas of significant concern include smoking tobacco and alcohol use, overweight and obesity levels in males and a need for more medical screening for the prevention of prostate and cervical cancer. Mental health issues are also prevalent to a concerning level, both in clinical states, self reported and self identified stress.

The de-identified report was submitted to AgForce members at the 2007 state conference whereby a summary report of findings was delivered with educational advice. This was supported with a video message from Dr Toby Ford for all AgForce members to download. A copy of the de-identified report and DVD can be supplied for further scrutiny.

Following the success of the Healthy Farmers Pilot Program during 2006-2007, AgForce and Ford Health developed an online health risk assessment (HRA) during 2008 which is due to be launched in April 2009. The HRA allows for the collection of the health information for the individual online or manually, whilst continuing the collection of health data on a central database so that there is recording and reporting on the overall health of farmers in Queensland which can be compared to norms within other populations.

This new online Healthy Farmers HRA initiative will allow the delivery of the health and wellbeing message to more farmers across Queensland and throughout Australia. It will also benefit from being more cost effective. It will also create a "virtual medical centre" where farmers can access various information including online presentations on health, factsheets on wellness and links to high quality community health web pages on medical issues (addendum 1).

In 2009 the Healthy Farmer program will provide:

- Personalized thorough health assessment with printable report, letter for a doctor as well as follow up on urgent medical issues
- Access to online workbooks to assist behaviour change on issues such as diet, exercise, mental health, smoking and alcohol intake
- Access to over 300 factsheets each containing links to further education on the internet.



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3. Partnering

The AgForce / Ford Health partnership has led to further partnerships being initiated in order to reach as many farmers as possible across Australia. Further partnerships will be developed into the future in order to continue to build on the success of this program and to reach more farmers with the aim to initiate change in health practices and attitudes.

Agricultural associations which have helped distribute the Healthy Farmers Program

- a) **AgForce** - Launch November 2006 to 8,000 Qld farmers
- b) **Growcom** - Launched April 2007 to Qld 1200 farmers
- c) **Canegrowers** - Launched April 2007 to Qld 3,000 farmers
- d) **Grain Growers Association** – Launched June 2007 to 17,000 farmers QLD/NSW
- e) **Western Australian Farmers Federation** – Launched March 2008 to 10,000 farmers WA

Ford Health has contributed the intellectual property for the Healthy Farmers Program which includes:

- I. 12 seminar topics that were then converted into an e-learning course that is streamed to all AgForce and other associated members – addendum 3 .
- II. Monthly health articles for the Envoy magazine (AgForce monthly magazine)
- III. Health system to collate and document the health data
- IV. State Conference video outlining the findings and health recommendations

Ford Health manages the standards and accreditation for recruitment of health professionals and coordinates the logistics to fulfill the clinical requirements. The AgForce / Ford Health partnership is building the new Healthy Farmers website and the online health assessment due for launch in April 2009.

The following bodies contribute support literature that is provided to the farmer at the completion of the health assessment.

- Queensland Health – Qld Government
- beyondblue
- Diabetes Australia
- Heart Foundation
- The Cancer Council
- CSIRO
- Health & Productivity Institute of Australia
- Australian Medical Association
- Rural Doctors Association of Queensland
- General Practice Queensland
- Dietitians Association of Australia
- Eat Well Be Active
- QML Pathology



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4. Winning

The next stage of Healthy Farmers Program is to develop the level of accessibility for the entire farming community which is made up of 28,905 farms and approximately 100,000 citizens of QLD.

Next Step

Expansion of the existing Healthy Farmers Program by going directly to each farmer with a Healthy Farmer pack that includes:

- a) Take home pack sent to every farming household in QLD that includes the 12 preventative health seminars in a DVD format – estimates that it will cost approximately \$3.75 per farm or \$108,394 to supply everyone with a copy of all 12 topics. Ramsay Hospitals has already agreed to sponsor the cost of developing the conversion from online to DVD thus the investment would only be the duplication and mail out costs.
- b) Healthy Farmer website development to ensure all QLD farmers can access the new online Healthy Farmer assessment program. The estimated budget for expansion of the webpage access is \$32,400. This self health assessment process to be offered to every farmer via the soon to be released Healthy Farmers online health assessment program provides.
 - a. Access to an online or paper base health assessment – addendum 1.
 - b. In the event that the collection point program for accurate measurements can be achieved this will form part of a strategy promoted later in the year finances permitting.
 - c. Receive a customized individual health report
 - d. GP referral letter for any identified medical base health risks
 - e. Goal setting and 12 month support to make changes to lifestyle health risks
 - f. Access to an 'Ask the Doctor' Healthy Farmer portal to allow the isolated farmer to receive general advice.

Future Expansion Funding Required

There are two important future plans required to ensure the Farming community is adequately supported in their preventative health plans.

1. Stakeholder mapping to ensure that those organisations currently working in this area might seek a collaborative position with AgForce to share their goals and resources. Coordination of the network of collection points for ease of access to pathology, accurate anthropometric measurements. Engagement of pathology houses, pharmacies, allied health professionals and deployment of Ford Health staff where necessary will assist in taking the sophistication of the self completed HRA to a higher level of accuracy and therefore benefit to all users.
2. Healthy Farmers Challenge to be offered to every farming family.
 - a. The creation of a 10 week exercise challenge whereby the participants travel around a virtual map of Qld – example attached as addendum 2.



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- b. Starter kit for every farmer containing a pedometer, log book, progress chart and exercise information booklet
- c. Step conversion calculator to convert non walking activity
- d. Dashboard showing updates on the farm's progress such as steps completed, farm ranking and distance to next destination.

If the Healthy Farmers Program is awarded a Healthy Queensland Award, the money will go towards initiating some of the next steps in the progression of the program as outlined above as well as assist in the future steps. AgForce and Ford Health are extremely committed to the success and progression of the Healthy Farmers Program and would like to ultimately have every Australian farmer accessing the program to ensure a healthier lifestyle in rural and remote regions.

Supporting Material

The following items can be provided for review of the program.

1. Outline of preventative health initiatives under the Health Farmers Program – addendum 3
2. DVD of the 30 minute Landline program that profiled the Healthy Farmers Program and its key findings.
3. DVD of the health presentation of the Healthy Farmers de-identified data at the State Conference
4. Direct mail letters sent from the AgForce President to members
5. Radio interviews – audio about the healthy farmer and its health findings
6. Newspaper articles profiling the Healthy Farmers Program
7. Explanation flyers and letters provided to the farming community
8. Healthy Farmers resource centre – articles and e-learning
9. Letters of support



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Addendum 1 Healthy Farmers virtual medical centre

Ford Health - myhealth - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://www.fordhealth.com.au/dev/index.php?action=stage2>

Welcome riotes!! It has been XX days since you accessed your profile on myhealth. Take the time to check in with your health goals and the wide variety of health information specific to you.

myhealth assessment

- view myhealth report
- view myhealth results
- myhealth GP referral letter
- view myhealth progress summary
- view myhealth check list

myhealth goals

- SMOKING:** It has been 14 days since I have given up smoking. I have saved \$140 since quitting! Well done, this is an important step to improving overall health.
- DIET:** I am thinking about changing my dietary intake in the next 6 months. Some of the bad things about my current diet are - I don't have much energy. It is expensive to eat takeaway all the time and I'm in a bad mood because I'm not eating properly.
- EXERCISE:** I have set 20th May as my goal date to begin exercising. I have worked out strategies to help me with my high risk situations and my wife, Jane and walking buddy, John are going to help me achieve this.

GP REFERRAL:
I need to make an appointment with my GP to follow up on the following risks:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Mammogram
- Bowel Cancer

I have been to my GP - please update my details
I don't have a GP - please help me find one

myhealth risks

Your key risks and links to further information and resources

suggested action by	your health risks
2 DAYS	blood pressure
2 WEEKS	cholesterol alcohol smoking
2 MONTHS	diet exercise mammogram bowel cancer

other health info

myhealth calendar

APRIL >>

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

heart attacks

If someone close to you experiences symptoms of heart attacks, you could the difference to their outcome by following some simple steps. [Read more...](#)

cold and flu

If one sneeze can travel more than 128km/h, cover 9m of distance and send 100,000 flu particles into the air, how can you protect yourself from cold and flu this season? [Read more...](#)

myhealthtools

- ask the doctor
- am I overweight?
- exercise intensity rating

Have your questions answered

need support phone 1300 660 986 or email us

Addendum 2 Healthy Farmers 10 week exercise challenge

Ford Health - Exercise Challenge - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://www.fordhealth.com.au/exercisechallenge/main/landing.php>

mychallenge - exercise

home | where am i? | resource centre | my progress | my team centre

daily tracker
06-02-2009
steps walked:

steps conversion calculator

help

Map data ©2009 GERMFA, MapData Solutions Pty Ltd, PSMA - Terms of Use

logout

dashboard

Date started: 31/01/2009

Distance travelled:

Me:	0
My team:	0

Steps per day:

My goal:	0
My average:	0

Next destination: Toowoomba

Days:	n/a
Steps:	1,734,767

End Date:

Actual:	10/04/2009
Estimated:	n/a

Team Ladder

Rank	Team	Steps



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Addendum 3.

Outline of Program

AgForce / Ford Health partnership created a series of preventative health initiatives for its members and the wider farming community under the Healthy Farmers Program.

These initiatives include:

1. Health education for farmers and families:

- f) Health Library - A monthly article for each association newsletter or magazine on preventative health topics.
 - g) E-learning Health Series course that covers 12 topics
 - i. **Secret Men's Business** - A detailed look into some of the main health issues which effect men.
 - ii. **Secret Women's Business** - A detailed look into some of the main health issues which effect women.
 - iii. **Live Life To The Full** - A highly practical workshop focusing on energy levels, healthy eating, exercise, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, stress management & healthy sleep.
 - iv. **Posture and Back Care** - Looking after your back and preventing injuries, correct lifting, posture, core strength & stability, ergonomic desk set up & back care exercises.
 - v. **Toppling Over: Stress Management** - How to recognize & cope with stress, tips to deal with & reduce stress in our busy lives.
 - vi. **Summer Health and Skin Cancer Prevention** - How to prepare your self for summer, heat illness, fluid intake, sun exposure, what is skin cancer & what are the signs & how to reduce your risks.
 - vii. **What's Your Poison (Alcohol, Caffeine and Nicotine)** - What are the physiological effects on the body, what are the recommended guidelines, how can it effect our lives & tips and techniques to reduce intake.
 - viii. **Effective Weight Management** - Effective diet, nutrition & exercise to help manage your weight.
 - ix. **Nutrition: Facts and Fallacies** - Healthy eating, Australian Dietary Guidelines, fad diets, guide to healthy shopping & label reading.
 - x. **Exercise: Finding the Time, Facts and Fallacies** - Guidelines for exercise, what type & how much we should do, how to fit exercise into our busy lifestyles & what works & what does not.
 - xi. **Healthy Sleeping Habits** - How much sleep we need, how to recognise sleep disorders, what we can do to improve the quality our sleep & how to maintain a healthy sleeping routine.
 - xii. **Winter Health: How to prepare Yourself** - How to boost your immune system, differences between colds & flues & facts on the flu vaccination.
2. **Electronic e-newsletter** related to the farmers health which each small business can pass on to their staff internally



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- a) Presentation to member groups, annual general meetings and continuing education courses.
3. **Healthy Farmer Health Assessment** – 21/2 hour full executive health assessment in a regional hospital.
4. **Healthy Farmer Health Assessment II** – 2 hour assessment conducted in rural and remote locations.
5. **Healthy Farmer Self Health Assessment** – This is being launched in April 2009 and allows the farmer to complete their own health assessment either online or in a paper base form.
6. **Data Collection on member health** – by having the farmers undertake a health assessment we collect their data and prepared a de-identified (no names) report on the overall health of the membership. This report, index and corresponding press releases can be supplied. This has been turned into a Healthy Farmers Index:
 - a) Public Awareness campaign was then created using this data to educate farmers on preventative health measures that are specifically tailored to members health profile this included the following:
 - i. 30minute segment on Landline
 - ii. 27 minute DVD whereby Dr Toby Ford addresses Agforce members at the 2007 Annual General Meeting to discuss outcomes.
 - iii. Presentation to National Rural and Remote Health Alliance of data findings
 - b) A comparison report was created to compare year on year participants and also industry cohorts such as grain growers versus graziers.
 - c) Return on investment calculation was undertaken using Access Economics health model designed on behalf of the QLD State Government.
7. **Partners in Health alliance** – this allows farmers to gain deals on health programs such as Home delivered meals, Gym discounts (YMCA) and access to corporate rates for services like massage, pre-employment, drug and alcohol assessments and other programs they can bring into their small work sites/organisations.
8. **Intervention Programs** – currently working with Beyond Blue for intervention with depression in the bush. We also work with Assure Programs a national EAP Provider to assist Farmers with stress, anxiety and other counseling requirements. We are also holding discussion with YMCA (QLD) to develop a remote and isolated fitness program. Further to this we are planning on holding the largest exercise challenge ever conducted for rural and remote communities. Titled the Farmers Challenge – this will encourage the farming community to walk or exercise the equivalent of 10,000 steps a day – record their steps online and following a virtual walking trip around QLD over a 10 week period.