

*All Island Farm Safety Conference 18th
June 2008*

Health promotion among farmers



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Introduction

- *Men Talking* discovered: From a health promotion perspective, farmers, as an occupational group, are particularly difficult to reach
- This is not least because they work long unstructured hours, but also because they often work in isolation, away from support structures like occupational health services, newsletters, or even notice boards – often used in other occupational setting to delivers health messages. (Stakelum, A. and Boland, J., 2001: 53)
- Consequently, farmers represent a particularly high-risk category in terms of accidents, injury and health problems in the workplace



Beyond Borders, a Community Well Being Initiative

- The overall aim of *Beyond Borders* - to build the community well being infrastructure for communities in the North East Cross Border Region i.e. East Monaghan, South Armagh and North Louth
- 4 strands:
Women's Well-Being Programme, Men's Well-Being Programme, Lay Health Worker's Training Programme, Practice to Policy



Men's well-being programme

- Networking with local health groups
- Men's steering group
- Liaising with statutory bodies on both sides of the border
- Linking with other men's organisations e.g. Men's Health Forum in Ireland
- Men's low use of the health services
- To promote preventative health
- Consultation with Mart Managers
- Regional and national strategies
- Promotion on local radio and print media

“If we are going to work with men, we must go to where they are” - GIMH

- Programme targeted at isolated rural men
- Cattle marts
- Sheep dog trials
- Pig racing
- GAA
- Golf classic for cancer research
- Pubs and supermarkets
- Community games



Castleblayney and Ballybay Marts

- Farmers, the majority of which were men, availed of a cardiovascular risk assessment
- They were also provided with advice on diet and lifestyle
- *I think it's a good idea that you can have your blood pressure checked without having to queue up in a doctors surgery. It's very handy, you're doing it in passing at your work" – Tom, Castleblayney Mart*





Men encouraged other men to participate.

- **Step 1:** Registration and introduction.
- **Step 2:** Cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose check – written results provided with follow-up advice.
- **Step 3:** Nutrition assessment, height, weight, BMI with follow up advice.
- **Step 4:** Physical activity assessment with follow-up advice.
- **Step 5:** Health promotion information offered and questions answered.



Findings

- Average age 53.8 years
- 36% Current Smokers – 64% Non Smokers of which 17% are ex-smokers
- Mean BMI 28.16
- 64% Drink Alcohol
- 22% are on medication for diabetes
- Average waist measurement was 41 inches
- National Averages:
 - 28% current smokers
 - Recommended BMI less than 25
 - 80% Drink alcohol
 - 4 inches greater than the recommended limit of 37 inches

Findings Continued

- Some farmers were referred on for further investigation with their GPs
- The Farmers who attended the Cardiovascular Check received a copy of their check-up form to bring to their GP on their next visit.





IFA Sunsmart

- Farmers have an increased risk for skin cancer, presumed to be secondary to their increased occupational exposure to sunlight.
- Male farmers show significantly elevated proportionate risks for cancers of the lip and squamous cell carcinomas of skin (NCRI, 2005).



North East

- A copy of the booklet “*Sun Safety & Farmers*” was sent to each IFA member
- Information Sessions at County IFA Executive meetings delivered by Health Promotion Dept. to assist in raising awareness of the importance of sun safety
- Sessions continue on an annual basis each May



Men and the Workplace

- Men's Health week: 9th – 17th June 2008
- The Men's Health Forum in Ireland calls on all workplaces to use Men's Health Week 2008 as an opportunity to focus on men's health, provide opportunities to create awareness of men's health issues and support men in making healthier choices.
- Those with responsibility for workplace environments can make a difference by putting in place policies and practice that support men to lead healthier lives. This makes sound economic sense as a healthier workforce is a more productive workforce”.

Any Burning Questions??

