GoodYarn
Enabling Farming Communities to Talk About Mental Health

**GoodYarn: Enabling Farming Communities to Talk About Mental Health** (GoodYarn) is a mental health literacy workshop targeting rural communities in New Zealand. The workshop was developed initially for the Otago-Southland Region in response to the service gap of a relevant, meaningful, and accessible mental health programme tailored to the specific needs of farmers and those living in rural communities, who are known to experience geographic, attitudinal and service configuration barriers in accessing mental health services.

GoodYarn is for anyone living or working in a rural community including farmers, rural employers and contractors, stock agents and rural consultants, vets, rural bankers and so on. The workshops are generally held in rural areas, and run by a facilitator with a rural background and personal experience or empathy with mental health problems. They are free, held in community spaces, typically 2.5 hours long, with groups of about 15-20 people (See promotional brochure, Appendix).

GoodYarn focuses on building key aspects of mental health literacy as defined by Jorm and considers this in the rural context, in particular acknowledging the stressors of living and working in a rural environment. This strategy aligns with the general mental health promotion approach of using methods that foster supportive environments and individual resilience. A significant proportion of the workshop is spent on providing easy and practical ways to introduce mental health into everyday conversations. In this way, we have taken a focus on trying to increase the mental health literacy of the rural community: “knowledge that is linked to the possibility of action to benefit one’s own mental health or that of others.” This is reflected in the three key evaluation indicators of the workshop: the ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and mental health problems; confidence to talk to someone when they’re concerned; and the ability to direct someone to appropriate support services.

The workshop utilises a variety of adult learning techniques to keep people interested and cater for all learning styles. It incorporates video clips from national mental health promotion programmes, a handbook with individual exercises, an interactive kinaesthetic exercise, presentations from the facilitator, group discussion about mock scenarios, and a quiz. Four core content areas are covered:

- What is mental health, and what influences it?
- Recognising signs of stress and common mental health problems.
- How to initiate a conversation with someone when you’re concerned about them.
- How to access appropriate support services

The workshops are held over lunch (which is provided), providing an important opportunity for networking and the sharing of personal experience amongst participants.

Feedback from the programme evaluation is positive. Near-all attendees would recommend the workshop to others. Common feedback included “Excellent,” “Everyone can benefit,” and “Very important issue across New Zealand society”. Further, some participants indicated a strong intention to utilise and act upon such information in the future: “[The workshop] will make me take more time to pay attention to changes in clients’ behaviour/attitude.” Participants also qualified the value of the workshop in light of the perceived lack of awareness of mental health issues in the general community: GoodYarn provides a rare opportunity for learning and discussion about mental health in the rural setting.

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2. Criteria

2.1 Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.

There is a high incidence of mental health problems in New Zealand: 46.6% of the population will meet the criteria for a mental disorder during their lives, 39.5% have already had experience of mental disorder and one in five New Zealanders have experienced a mental health disorder within the past 12 months. The Southern region (Otago and Southland), for which GoodYarn was initially developed, has a higher prevalence of mental health disorders when compared with the national average. For example, just over one quarter of women (26.7%) residing in the Southern region between the ages of 45-64 years are affected by common mental health problems. This is almost three times higher than the national rate for the same group. Overall, the average prevalence rate of common mental disorders in the Southern region is 17.7%, more than double the national average of 6.6%.

Whilst the prevalence of mental health disorders is not any higher in rural communities, people residing in rural centres or areas have lower rates of visits to the mental health specialty sector. As 40% of the WellSouth’s enrolled population live outside the main cities of Dunedin and Invercargill, it is important that our programmes have a strong rural focus. This is supported by New Zealand’s suicide statistics that show a higher rate of suicide in rural, as compared to urban, areas (12.5 deaths per 100,000 population in rural areas compared with 10.6 deaths per 100,000 population in urban areas). This equated to 77 deaths in 2011, or three deaths every fortnight. When broken down by occupation, on average 24 farmers die by suicide each year. Second to motor vehicle accidents, suicide is the biggest cause of death on New Zealand farms.

In light of these statistics, there is an obvious need for easily accessible mental health programmes in the Southern Region and indeed in rural communities throughout New Zealand. This is exacerbated by evidence that whilst many New Zealanders with mental health problems eventually seek professional help, it can take a number of years before they do. For example, in a 12 month period, only 38.9% of people with a mental disorder visited a health professional. Any delay in receiving adequate support can mean both individuals and families are exposed to longer suffering, and untreated conditions will become worse over time – what starts as a mild depression or anxiety problem can result in a more moderate to severe problem and recovery will take longer.

Local Impact

Since 2014, over 20 workshops with over 300 participants have been delivered across Otago-Southland. Workshops have been held across three main settings: general community, agribusiness, and veterinary practices. Overall, attendees have been a mixture of farmers and their family, farming workers, and other rural professionals such as bank workers and veterinary practice staff.

The reach of the workshops is facilitated by endorsement from five key rural organizations, who promote the program through their professional networks: Rural Women, Beef and Lamb, Federated

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
Farmers, Rural Support Southland, and Dairy Women Network. Assistance from these organizations ensures high levels of workshop attendance in the Southern region’s most rural communities.

The local success of the programme is affirmed by local media coverage (Table 1, Appendix).

Table 1. Media coverage of GoodYarn (previously, Rural Life: Keeping the Balance)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Published</th>
<th>Article title</th>
<th>Publication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25/06/2014</td>
<td>Addressing Rural Stress</td>
<td>Otago Daily Times – Taieri Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/07/2014</td>
<td>Rural mental health course aims to spread awareness</td>
<td>The Ensign</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/07/2014</td>
<td>Rural mental health course aims to spread awareness</td>
<td>Southern Rural Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>30/10/2014</td>
<td>Keeping the Balance – tackling rural depression</td>
<td>Otago Daily Times – Focus on Farming</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/11/2014</td>
<td>Workshops on rural mental health hailed a success</td>
<td>Southern Rural Life and Otago Daily Times online</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/11/2014</td>
<td>Link to ODT article, 07/11/2014</td>
<td>Te Pou – kawerongo hiko (e-bulletin). Available from: <a href="http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=1e5eb2308a&amp;id=4ce599e3fc&amp;e=81e70ba68">http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=1e5eb2308a&amp;id=4ce599e3fc&amp;e=81e70ba68</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/02/2015</td>
<td>Rural life mental health success</td>
<td>Southern Rural Life</td>
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**National impact**

Following successful delivery of the local workshops, WellSouth fielded requests to deliver GoodYarn further afield – initially from the Rural Support Trust in South Canterbury – an area at that time in drought. Soon after, as milk prices dropped and financial pressures on the dairy industry increased, DairyNZ also expressed interest in delivering GoodYarn. These requests highlighted the significant contribution of GoodYarn to the mental health promotion space in New Zealand – the program fulfilled a health service need that was not being met through other means. WellSouth thus developed a nationally relevant version of the programme. Working with DairyNZ and using its national networks and contacts in the rural sector, WellSouth trained facilitators in other rural organizations to be able to deliver the programme to a national audience. This is a sustainable model where the licensed organisations deliver the programme to their staff using their own resources, professional development systems and staff.

The result of this programme expansion has multiple benefits, at both the national and local level. Nationally, GoodYarn is creating a network of ‘mental health literate’ rural professionals, able to detect and respond to signs of mental health problems in self and others. Further, it is creating a professional culture that having mental health conversations is the norm, which will chip away at the long-standing stigma and misinformation associated with mental health (see letter of support, Appendix).

The success of the national programme is indicated by recent media coverage, as shown in Table 2. WellSouth staff and GoodYarn facilitators have also been invited to, and have spoken to various audiences about the GoodYarn programme, including:

- Rural Support Trust National Conference (2014)
- Rural Women New Zealand (2015)
- NZ College of Clinical Psychologists Conference (2015)
- University of Otago Public Health Seminar Series (June 2016)
Table 2. Media coverage of national GoodYarn programme

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<tr>
<th>Date Published</th>
<th>Article title</th>
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<tr>
<td>15/03/2016</td>
<td>Mental health workshop aims to give rural communities a lifeline</td>
<td>Stuff.co.nz Available from <a href="http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU1603/S00476/dairy-industry-marshalling-its-resources.htm">http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU1603/S00476/dairy-industry-marshalling-its-resources.htm</a></td>
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2.2 Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practice.

The process of developing the programme started with a scoping exercise on what mental health programmes were currently available in rural areas. The main issues identified during this process was that existing programmes were either too expensive to deliver to numerous small rural communities; they were inflexible (both length and content) to the needs of different settings; or they weren’t responsive to the specific needs of rural communities.

As there was nothing existing that we could implement in our area that met the needs of our community, we researched relevant initiatives whose efficacy was supported by evaluation. Unfortunately there weren’t any good systemic reviews or meta-analyses available; there is a general dearth of literature on the evaluation of interventions to improve mental health/wellbeing or to increase mental literacy in rural or remote communities. Nonetheless, the literature was clear about the need for a collaborate approach to mental health service provision, involving multiple agencies and multiple strategies. The collaborative approach was enacted through the development and review of the workshop content and resources with a multidisciplinary team including a psychologist, Māori Mental Health manager, Mental Health Education nurses and health promotion specialists, as well as rural ‘specialists’ in the form of employees and clients of two rural organisations. The workshop and resources were then piloted in two locations in Otago and Southland, and revised according to the feedback and findings of the pilot.

By providing a mental health programme targeting the promotion of mental health literacy – sitting outside the primary care framework with its focus on therapeutic treatment – GoodYarn contributes directly to a ‘multiple strategy’ mental health service approach. The focus on mental health literacy is acknowledged as best practice in mental health promotion. Mental health literacy is “knowledge that is linked to the possibility of action to benefit one’s own mental health or that of others.” Five core aspects underpin this approach, which involve instilling in the community:

(i) Knowledge of how to maintain wellbeing and prevent mental health problems;
(ii) How to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health problems;
(iii) Knowledge of how to seek help and available services and treatment;
(iv) Knowledge of self-help strategies for mild problems;
(v) How to support others experiencing mental health problems.

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For GoodYarn, these five areas were condensed to form three key aims and evaluation indicators: recognising signs and symptoms, starting up a conversation, and how to access help. These three areas are supported by a recent review as the key areas for best practice prevention and early intervention in farmers’ mental health, and to overcome known barriers to accessing support.\textsuperscript{14}

This approach also aligns with the general mental health promotion approach of using methods that foster supportive environments and individual resilience.\textsuperscript{15} By raising the mental health literacy of those not directly needing mental health help, but in positions to help those that do – such as agribusiness professionals (e.g. bankers, stock agents, lawyers and vets) who are well placed to perceive stressors in farmers – GoodYarn builds a community with the knowledge and skills to identify and approach those experiencing mental health problems, and direct them to appropriate support and services.

This project is independent of the national Farmer Mental Wellness Strategy. However, the lead agency in the strategy, the Mental Health Foundation, was consulted with during the development and implementation phases to ensure GoodYarn was not replicating actions planned within the strategy. GoodYarn was nevertheless aligned with the five action areas of the strategy:

- Knowledge and skills about healthy attitudes and behaviours
- Reducing the stigma so farmers feel comfortable to seek and receive help
- Local, regional and national commitment for action and solutions
- Research and evaluation to identify knowledge gaps and find solutions
- Self-awareness and connected communities.

Arguably, the innovative and evidence-based nature of GoodYarn is affirmed by other bodies working in the rural sector selecting the workshop as their programme of choice to offer staff across the country. It particularly speaks to the lack of a similar quality service available elsewhere in New Zealand.

2.3 Evidence of participation of mental health consumers, in the planning, implementation and evaluation as relevant.

Mental health consumers and key rural organisations were involved in the development and provision of GoodYarn right from the start. Following the initial scoping exercise that revealed a lack of relevant services in New Zealand, we undertook consultation with a number of key rural organisations including Federated Farmers and the Rural Support Trust. They took the concept of GoodYarn and the draft handbook to a number of their clients and provided some extremely valuable insights, including but not limited to:

- The need for a facilitator with a farming or rural background – “farmers don’t want to listen to a ‘health’ person, delivering a health message. They want someone they can relate to and who will understand the different issues that rural people experience.”
- That farmers appreciate incorporating humour as a strategy for talking about difficult subjects.
- Information about farming scenarios that cause particular stress that we hadn’t considered, in particular farm succession.
- The potential for people who might be the only person a farmer sees that day, like a truck driver or stock agent, to be a target audience for the programme.
- That very few farmers would commit a whole day or even half day to attending a workshop. A workshop needed to be short and succinct. Likewise, the timing of the workshop delivery


must fit in with ‘quiet’ periods on the farming calendar – i.e. don’t bother delivering it during lambing or calving.

From this feedback, we sought out a facilitator of rural background and who also had personal experience with mental health problems. This facilitator was instrumental in the development of the workshop content and resources, ensuring that language, content and delivery was appropriately tailored to the rural audience, as well as being acceptable from a mental health consumer perspective. Further, with permission of the author, we incorporated some iconic Footrot Flats cartoons into the handbook to make it somewhat more appealing, easy to read and light-hearted, and developed the programme to also be applicable for rural professionals, inducing scenarios relating to interactions between rural professionals and clients. We also had the text of the handbook reviewed and edited by a rural communications specialist to ensure the language and concepts were appropriate and engaging for rural people.

Figure 1. Example of Footrot Flats cartoon used in GoodYarn workbooks. Image courtesy of Murray and Pam Ball from Diogenes Designs.

2.4 Evidence of Partnerships and Linkages (collaboration for continuity between organisations).

Following the initial consultation, GoodYarn sought endorsement from five key rural organisations: Rural Women New Zealand, Beef and Lamb New Zealand, Federated Farmers of New Zealand, Rural Support Trust, and Dairy Women Network. Partnership with these organisations is mutually beneficial. Promotion of the workshops through their professional networks increases workshop attendance across the rural community, due to the recommendation coming from a trusted source. For the organisations themselves, the free workshop provides their staff and members with an opportunity for professional development and to create a workplace and organisational cultures that value and support wellbeing.

The partnership with these organisations has been further strengthened through the development of the national arm of the programme. Seven rural organisations including Rural Support Trusts, livestock genetics companies, a farming cooperative and an industry association each hold a (paid) license with WellSouth to deliver GoodYarn and as a condition of the license contribute their evaluative material to WellSouth’s monitoring and evaluation of the programme on the national level.
WellSouth produces a quarterly facilitator’s newsletter, provides training, and produces the handbooks for these organisations. It speaks highly of the progress that can be made in the promotion of mental health / wellbeing through collaborations between the health and business sector, as is supported by international literature.16

2.5 Verification and evaluation of the program’s effectiveness

A survey-based evaluation was conducted based on 15 GoodYarn workshops held between May 2014 and July 2015. Workshops were provided in three different contexts: a general setting, agri-business setting, and at several veterinary practices. Nine workshops were held in a general setting, providing just under 60% of total workshop attendance. Participants in this group were a mixture of farmers and their families, farming workers, and other rural professionals such as stock agents, bank staff and lawyers. Three workshops were conducted in both the agri-business and veterinary practice setting, providing just over 20% of the total workshop attendance each. Overall, 91% of workshop participants completed the evaluation form.

Workshop acceptability and perceived impact

The first two questions asked participants to rate, using a five-point Likert scale, their agreement with a statement about the acceptability and impact of the workshop. Almost two-thirds (64%, n=141) strongly agreed with the statement, and over one third (34%, n=76) agreed. ‘Strongly disagree’ and ‘neither’ were selected by two participants (1%) each.

Further, 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop had increased their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing (Figure 1). Only one participant disagreed. It is important to keep in mind that some participants qualified their lack of change due to being already well-informed mental health professionals.

![Increased Knowledge of Mental Health and Wellbeing](image)

Figure 1. Participant agreement with the statement that “The training increased my knowledge of mental health and wellbeing,” (n=158, 71% response rate).

Awareness of Mental Health Signs and Symptoms

Before the workshop, most participants (45%, n=99) felt moderately aware of mental health signs and symptoms. One quarter (n=55) felt very aware and 19% felt not very aware. Only 10% (n=21) felt extremely aware of the signs and symptoms of mental health problems pre-workshop.

As Figure 2 shows, participants perceived GoodYarn to generally increase their awareness. Post-workshop, most participants (49%, n=109) felt extremely aware, or very aware (43%, n=96).

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Notably, 44% (n=98) felt the workshop had increased their awareness by a whole category on the Likert Scale, and 32% (n=70) felt it had increased by two categories.

![Awareness of Mental Health Signs and Symptoms](image1)

**Figure 2.** Self-rated awareness of signs and symptoms of mental health problems pre- and post-workshop (n=221, 99% response rate).

**Confidence to talk to someone when concerned about their mental health**

Before the workshop, over half of participants felt not at all or not very confident to start a discussion about mental health. Just over one quarter felt moderately confident, and 13% felt very confident. Only 5% (n=10) felt very confident.

Post-workshop, near-all participants felt very moderately to extremely confident to start a discussion about mental health. Almost two thirds selected ‘very confident’ (63%, n=140). Only 2% (n=5) felt not at all or not very confident post-workshop. This is shown graphically in Figure 3.

![Confidence to Talk about Mental Health Concerns](image2)

**Figure 3.** Perceived confidence to talk to someone about their mental health pre- and post-workshop (n=221, 99% response rate).
The magnitude of the impact of GoodYarn on confidence was quite dramatic: over one third perceived an increased in one Likert category, and another third perceived an increased in two categories. Over 10% felt it had increased by three categories.

**Knowledge about Mental Health Support Services**
Before the workshop, about two thirds of participants felt not very or only moderately knowledgeable about mental health support services. Eighteen percent (n=36) felt very knowledgeable, 11% (n=22) felt not at all knowledgeable and 5% felt extremely knowledgeable (n=9).

GoodYarn participation resulted in a notable positive shift in knowledge about mental health support services, as shown graphically in Figure 4. Post-workshop, over 90% felt very or extremely knowledgeable.

![Knowledge of Mental Health Support Services](image)

**Figure 4.** Perceived knowledge about mental health support services pre- and post-workshop (n=191, 96% response rate).

Again, the magnitude of the impact was high: one third perceived an increase in knowledge of one Likert category, one third perceived an increased in two categories and 17% (n=34) perceived an increased in three categories. A small number of participants perceived a change in four categories (3% n=5).

**General Feedback: A valued opportunity**
In the free-text comments area, 64 participants provided general affirmations for the workshop, most commonly “excellent!” and “thank you!” Others elaborated on the specific cause for their affirmation: the “great networking” opportunity the workshop provided; an appreciation of the availability of a specific service for the rural community; and specific reference to the workshop length – “good length, not too long.” Various participants also acknowledged two specific outcome of the workshop: helping them to understand and be of assistance to others wellbeing, but also helping them assess and maintain their own mental health. Some participants felt that “Overall I got a lot out of this course it benefitted me as an employer as well as for me personally,” “Made me realise my own mental health probably needs a bit of exercise!” and that it facilitated “self improvement”.
Would they recommend it?
Participants were greatly positive regarding workshop recommendation: 95% of respondents (n=209) said they would recommend it to others. with over half providing reasons why.

The largest topic of feedback related to how participants felt GoodYarn had significantly raised their awareness and knowledge of mental health issues. The “informative” and “factual” nature of the workshop was repeatedly praised. This increased awareness and knowledge was perceived to be of great importance in light of the prevalence of mental health issues: “Given high numbers, it is important we are able to understand and give help,” “Gives me the awareness that it is there and requires assistance.” The immediate impact of the information imparted during the workshop is evident in such responses. Further, some participants indicated a strong intention to utilise and act upon such information in the future: “[The workshop] will make me take more time to pay attention to changes in clients’ behaviour/attitude.”

Participants also qualified the value of the workshop with reference to the perceived lack of awareness of mental health issues in the general community: “Awareness, not enough out there!” Many also acknowledged their own lack of awareness pre-workshop: “Learned a lot.” “Really helpful. More to mental health that I first thought.” GoodYarn thus provided a rare opportunity for learning and discussion.

Implicit in these comments was the way GoodYarn, by increasing awareness and knowledge, had increased participants’ general confidence with the subject of mental health; as one respondent commented, “Awareness is power.” Confidence was specifically connected to the practical outlets of the awareness and knowledge raise by the workshop: 13 participants expressed the workshop had provided with them practical ‘tools’ or ‘strategies’ by which to identify or help those with mental health problems.

In addition to general ‘raised awareness’, various participants highlighted how the workshop specifically worked to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health. By doing so, GoodYarn was seen to assist in the normalisation of both mental health issues and conversations about mental health. Many participants recognised the ongoing ‘taboo’ and ‘stigma’ associated with mental health problems, and thus expressed particular value for the workshop: “Mental health problems important and under-recognised and need to break the taboo,” “Reduces stigma and brings it to the forefront / normality. Provokes self-reflection.” Indeed, some participants acknowledged their own tendency to “shy away from” discussions of mental health, thus valuing the workshops for demystification and bringing the important topic into the limelight. Specifically, one participant particularly noted that the content of the workshop is a “conversation that needs to happen in rural community.” Overall, normalisation was valued as an outcome of the workshop as it facilitated the ease with which people could identify the need for access mental health support in self and others.

Many participants also affirmed the accessible, non-confrontational and interactive nature of the workshop delivery. Its success was attribute to the way it framed the discussion about mental health such that people “wouldn’t feel threatened by it.” A key contributor to the non-threatening nature of the workshop was the “focus on helping self/others without differentiating. I suspect the farmers will find it less intimidating (if they have issues themselves), talking about helping other but learning to get help themselves.” Other important and commonly affirmed aspects was the “relaxed” atmosphere, and interactive format that is practically-focused. Further, the importance of providing first-hand stories from real farmers was affirmed: both in terms of the workshop presented and the video clips which were presented of farmers talking about mental health (sourced from depression.org.nz).
3. Conclusion

GoodYarn has addressed an important mental health service gap in the Otago-Southland region of New Zealand, as well as at the national stage. By providing communities with a free, flexible workshop tailored to the specific needs of the rural setting, WellSouth has provided a pathway to increase mental health literacy and subsequent wellbeing of the rural population. The 2014-2015 programme evaluation provides strong evidence that GoodYarn is indeed achieving this goal: participants reported increases in their awareness of mental health signs and symptoms, confidence to talk about mental health issues, and knowledge of relevant support services.

The innovation of GoodYarn can be seen most immediately in the rural-specific nature of the workshop, able to accommodate needs of the various groups that fall under this category: farmers, rural employers and contractors, stock agents and rural consultants, agri-business professionals and so on. As the evaluation demonstrated, the workshop was particularly valued because of the way it addressed the specifics of living with mental health issues in the rural community. By taking care to address these elements, the process of normalisation of mental health conversations is arguably increased.

The approach of GoodYarn follows best practice mental health promotion: a focus on increasing knowledge paired with the confidence to use such knowledge to benefit self and others, and a general focus on self-empowerment. Further, the innovation, overall success and sustainability of the programme has been grounded in ongoing partnership with key stakeholder organisations in the rural sector. This is most evident in the request receive to develop a framework for the national delivery of the programme – which also affirms the innovative and unique service provided by GoodYarn at the national scale.

4. Referees

Removed for privacy
5. Appendix of Support Material

5.1 Letter of support

12 April 2016

LETTER OF SUPPORT – GOODYARN PROGRAMME

Most businesses go through highs and lows, but we know the rural industry is particularly susceptible to a wide range of influences and the farming community regularly faces stressors that ‘townies’ don’t. Farmlands understands this and as such, we have recently been working to increase the skills and confidence of our people across a number of related areas.

Every day, Farmlands employees are travelling up rural driveways and having a range of conversations with shareholders. Each of these Farmlands people has a role to advise and offer purchasing solutions but our desire is that they can also point the way to some other ‘non-sales’ solutions. One of the initiatives that has given us good success, is the GoodYarn programme developed by Wellsouth.

To date, we have put through close to 70 people through GoodYarn workshops and the feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive & positive. Attendees have arrived at the workshop with little or no knowledge about what to do or say when they come across a shareholder who is facing tough times and on completion of the workshop, they have felt much more confident and comfortable about what to say and where to go for additional help.

We have found the GoodYarn workshop to be practical, results focussed and well developed. The language and case studies are relevant and the workshop encourages attendees to be involved by providing opportunities to share stories and practice the skills in a safe and supportive environment. This approach contributes to giving our Farmlands rural professionals the practical tools and confidence that will help them to include mental wellness as part of their regular conversations.

I am very happy to provide this letter of support for the GoodYarn programme and more than happy to provide further information if necessary.

Regards

Grigor McDonald
Organisational Capability Manager
Farmlands Co-operative Society Limited
Ph 03 357 7912
5.2 GoodYarn Media Coverage


B) ‘Rural mental health course aims to spread awareness’, The Ensign, 18/07/2014.
C) ‘Rural mental health course aims to spread awareness’, Southern Rural Life, 16/07/2014.

Southern Rural Support Trust is hosting two workshops aimed at rural mental health this month, focusing on practices to address stress and anxiety.

The workshops will be held in March and April, with the first one scheduled for March 31st at the Raglan Rogue Hotel, and the second one on April 21st at the Ruakura Agricultural Park, Hamilton. Both workshops will feature guest speakers and will cover a range of topics related to mental health.

The workshops are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals to discuss their experiences and learn strategies for coping with stress and anxiety. Participants will have the opportunity to connect with others facing similar challenges and exchange ideas and resources.

The workshops are free to attend, and participants are encouraged to bring a friend. To register or for more information, please contact the Southern Rural Support Trust at 0800 800 200 or visit their website at www.southernruraltrust.org.nz.

For more information on mental health resources and support, please visit the Mental Health and Addictions Foundation website at www.mha.org.nz.
Keeping the Balance — tackling rural depression

By SALLY RAE

WHEN it came to finding a presenter for the Rural Life: Keeping the Balance workshop, Lindsay Wright ticked all the boxes. The workshop, developed by the Southern Primary Health Organisation, has been developed to reduce stress in the rural environment.

Mr Wright, from Wandin, Southland, is involved with the Southland Rural Support Trust, having changed roles earlier this year from chairperson to co-ordinator.

The trust assisted rural individuals and their families to get back on their feet following challenging circumstances such as adverse financial, personal or climatic events.

He also had a background in public speaking, through his involvement in Toastmasters, and had farmed for 24 years, as a fourth-generation farmer, before leasing the property.

Possibly most importantly, Mr Wright had first-hand experience of the stress those in the rural sector dealt with, having experienced depression himself.

So when he stood in front of a group of rural folk to deliver the presentation, he knew exactly what it was like to have “a lump in your stomach”.

The free workshop was specifically designed for people living in rural communities, to raise awareness of mental health and stress-related issues, address the stigma associated with them and learn how to talk about them.

The workshop covered how to recognise signs of stress and other mental health problems, how to reduce and manage stress, how to initiate a conversation with someone when you were concerned about them, and how to find appropriate support services.

The Southern PHO team had done a “great job” in bringing all the information together so that he, as presenter, knew it was accurate, Mr Wright said.

That gave him the confidence to add his touch to it, in terms of the reality and experience of “being there”.

He believed the combination created a very powerful but very credible package, he said.

Several pilot workshops were held before the programme was rolled out to farmers in rural communities. Six workshops had been held so far, including one for the Clinton Young Farmers Club.

The model was slightly adapted to fit with the club’s monthly meeting and Mr Wright was thrilled with the response.

More than 100 people had now been through the workshop and it was proving to be “absolutely well received”.

An evaluation was done at the end of each workshop and the shift in knowledge from before to after had been quite marked, he said.

Being able to take more than two decades of farming “plus a bit of tough times” and add it together to give something back to the rural community made Mr Wright feel “very positive”, he said.

The course was usually two to two and a half hours, delivered to groups of 15-20 people.
‘Workshops on rural mental health hailed a success’, *Southern Rural Life and Otago Daily Times online*, 07/11/2014.

Workshops on rural mental health hailed a success

YVONNE O’HARA

Nearly 100 people have attended six “Rural Life: Keeping the Balance” workshops in Otago and Southland since the programme to address rural mental health was launched earlier this year.

Developed by Southern Primary Health Organisation’s health promotion and projects co-ordinator Katie Jahnke, of Dunedin, in association with Lindsay Wright, of Wemdonside, who is also the programme’s facilitator and the Southland Rural Support Trust co-ordinator, it is designed to raise awareness of stress and anxiety, and in particular acknowledge the stressors of living and working in a rural environment.

“Our programme was developed with farmers and is delivered by people who work in and are from rural communities,” Ms Jahnke said. “It focuses on the grass roots level of mental health, including mental health problems like depression, which can arise when we are unable to manage those stresses in an effective way or get adequate support.”

“The programme increases confidence for people to talk about it and encouraging help seeking and health promoting behaviour.”

“So far, we have delivered the workshop to almost 100 rural people at six workshops including one Young Farmers club.”

“Feedback and evaluation has been extremely positive with great engagement from rural communities,” she said.

Ms Jahnke said a recent press release from Federated Farmers highlighted the concerning number of suicides among farmers.

“We are working to address this at a local level with our Rural Life programme.”

“We want to encourage people to incorporate mental health into everyday conversations. It’s about normalising it.”

“We give them some really easy and practical ways to start or introduce mental health into a conversation.”

“John Kirwan has done some great work in helping to reduce stigma around mental health so we’re just trying to build on that.”

“Participants from our programme have reported a significant increase in awareness of some of the warning signs of stress and mental health problems and increased confidence to talk to someone when they’re concerned.”

Mr Wright said the programme filled a gap and met a need.

“They had run one workshop for a Young Farmers’ club, changing the format from about two hours to half an hour to fit in with their meeting structure.”

“That went amazingly well,” Mr Wright said.

“They were very engaged.”

“Now that we have a shorter version that we know will work, we can look at going to other Young Farmers clubs.”

“The shorter version may able to be slotted into field days.”

“This kind of thing would be interesting at rural conferences.”

He said the workshop format could be adapted to fit the needs of a specific group.

As farmers were busy at this time of year, they were now focusing on running workshops for the agribusiness sector, he said.

The workshops are free and open to anyone in the rural sector.
Rural life mental health success

YVONNE O'HARA
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Following on from the success of the “Rural Life: Keeping the Balance” workshops run in Otago and Southland last year, Southern Primary Health Organisation’s health promotion and projects co-ordinator Katie Jahnke, of Dunedin, has been asked to make a presentation at a prestigious conference in Auckland in March.

The Rural Life: Keeping the Balance programme was developed by Ms Jahnke and her team in association with Southern Support Trust co-ordinator Lindsay Wright, of Wendonside, who is also the programme’s facilitator.

The programme’s workshops are for rural people and are designed to raise awareness about how to manage stress and anxiety, how to recognise early signs of mental health problems, how to talk to people who might have issues and how to find the necessary support.

Ms Jahnke is to speak at the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP) Suicide Prevention Conference in Auckland on February 26.

She said her presentation would include why there was a need for the programme, the structure of developing the workshop and resources in collaboration with key stakeholders and community members, the implementation in Otago and Southland, as well as some initial results, and future directions.

“So far we have had over 130 people attend one of eight workshops,” Ms Jahnke said.

“Five workshops were in rural communities, two specifically for the agribusiness sector and one shortened version that can be delivered as part of an existing meeting such as Young Farmers or Rotary.

“We have four more workshops planned in March for North and Central Otago areas.

“Feedback from the workshop has been very positive with people regularly reporting increased awareness of the signs of stress and mental health problems and importantly, increased confidence to talk to someone when they are concerned about them.

“Participants also reported increased knowledge of what support services were available in people when they needed it.”

Before the workshops, only 28% of participants reported being confident or extremely confident to talk to someone when concerned about them.

“After the workshop, 89% felt confident or extremely confident to do so.

“We have had lots of interest from DHBs, PHOs and RSTs (Rural Support Trust) all over New Zealand, wanting to know more about what we’ve been running down here, which is great.

“One of the key things we learnt when developing Rural Life was that it needed to be presented by someone with a rural background that can understand the specific stresses of rural living and who is respected by attendees.”

Future workshops—

Omakau: Monday March 2
Gamaru: Tuesday March 3
Kawar: Wednesday March 4
Rossburg: Friday March 6

For more information email: katie.jahnke@wellsouth.org.nz or ring: (03) 477-1163.
5.3 GoodYarn promotional brochure

"Overall I got a lot out of this workshop. It benefitted me as an employer, as well as for me personally."

- Participant, GoodYarn workshop, Gore

To book your GoodYarn workshop or for more information contact:

Louise Thompson
WellSouth Primary Health Network
03 477 1163
Lounge.Thompson@wellsouth.org.nz

This project is supported by:
Goodfarm benefits

A longer and more enjoyable life
- Improved personal and professional relationships
- Increased immunity
- Decreased risk of physical illness
- Increased performance and productivity
- Increased ability to cope with challenging situations

Some benefits are:

Good farm health is an essential part of overall health and wellbeing and can have positive effects on individual, families and communities.

Who should attend?

GQ coastal farmers, workshop core participants, practically focused, rural, farm and rural health professionals, stock agents, rural consultants, rural employees and contractors.

Goodfarm workshops are designed to:

- Help improve the health of people in rural communities
- Improve the health of people in rural communities
- Improve mental wellbeing
- Improve financial wellbeing
- Improve physical wellbeing
- Improve emotional wellbeing
- Improve social wellbeing

What does Goodfarm cover?

- A former farmer and rural support coordinator.
- The workshop is delivered by Judey Welsh, a former farm and rural health professional.
- The workshop is designed to help improve the mental wellbeing of people in rural communities.
- The workshop is delivered by Judey Welsh, a former farm and rural health professional.
- The workshop is designed to help improve the mental wellbeing of people in rural communities.

Why have you heard about Goodfarm workshops?

Very useful and targeted at rural mental health problems.

How to access the support services and how to access the support services

Tips for maintaining mental wellbeing.