

Tuesday 30 May 2023

LMC Supports NI Agri-Rural Health Forum

ENCOURAGING farming families and rural dwellers to prioritise their health and wellbeing topped the agenda at the inaugural event of the Northern Ireland Agri-Rural Health Forum. Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive, Ian Stevenson was delighted to be invited to join stakeholders from across the agri-food industry for the event held at Balmoral Show.

The lunch time event brought together a panel of speakers, including farmers and medical professionals who each outlined the importance of being mindful of blood pressure and occupational health risk factors.

Commenting following the event Ian said, “The NI Agri-Rural Health Forum brings together key decision makers in agriculture, public, voluntary, government and related commercial organisations. In doing so the Forum helps influence public opinion and ensures that mental and physical health needs in rural communities are appropriately incorporated into strategy and policy development.”

Attendees at the event heard from a number of well-known local farmers about their lived personal health experiences, the challenges they went through and how important it is to promote positive health and wellbeing.

Following the farmers Dr Rebecca Orr, a rural GP and Chair of the NI Agri-Rural Health Forum addressed those in attendance. Dr Orr described the event as a “milestone” in the battle against poor occupational health in the farming community. She said, “We want every farmer in Northern Ireland to take 2 minutes to check their blood pressure and reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke as well as other disease.”

Ian continued, “The event at Balmoral Show introduced a wider campaign focused on encouraging farmers to get their blood pressure checked. It was apt to hear from Fearghal McKinney from the British Heart Foundation and Christina Faulkner from the Farm Families Health Check service on the importance of keeping a check on blood pressure.

“Both speakers outlined the risks of high blood pressure which if left untreated increases risks of serious problems such as heart disease, strokes and kidney disease. High blood pressure rarely has noticeable symptoms and it was highlighted at the event that an estimated 20% of the population in Northern Ireland could have the condition, with many people undiagnosed.

“From an LMC perspective we know how good farmers and farming families are when it comes to looking after their animals but often these dedicated workers aren’t as good at caring for their own physical and mental health. We would encourage all farmers to prioritise their personal health and wellbeing and be aware of some of the common risk factors that can lead to high blood pressure such as being overweight, having a lot of stress, drinking too much alcohol or caffeine-based drinks and having a poorly balanced diet.”

To find out more about the NI Agri-Rural Health Forum and the work of Rural Support visit, <https://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/what-we-do/support-hub/social-farming-innovation/ni-agri-rural-health-forum/>

ENDS

Photo caption

001 – Attendees at the NI Agri-Rural Health Forum event hear from Fearghal McKinney, CEO of the British Heart Foundation

Notes to Editor

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