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Mental health funding initiative well timed

Today's announcement of a \$500,000 funding boost to support mental health initiatives targeted at rural communities could not be better timed, says Dalton Kelly, New Zealand Rural General Practice Network Chief Executive.

Health Minister Jonathan Coleman and Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy announced the funding initiative at a Fieldays breakfast this morning (June 11). While the details are still being worked through it is expected the focus will be on the promotion, prevention and early intervention of rural mental health issues. The Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries have each contributed \$250,000 to the one off funding boost.

"This year is shaping up to be a tough one for farmers and rural communities off the back of lower milk prices, weather extremes that include both droughts and flooding, job losses and an already high farmer suicide rate in some parts of the country," says Mr Kelly.

"The extra government funding is well timed and will be welcomed by rural communities and health professionals.

"With about 200 rural medical practices New Zealand wide we are already on high alert to deal with mental health issues as they arise and we encourage farmers, their families and indeed rural people in general to come forward with any mental health issues they may be experiencing."

Mr Kelly says there are many programmes and resources available through various agencies to assist people who are under pressure through economic factors, depression, or who are feeling suicidal and "we encourage people in that situation to come forward and seek professional help".

The Network in conjunction with the Rural Support Trusts and Dairy NZ has issued a high alert notification to its members in recognition of the pressure farmers are under economically, mentally and generally at this time.

For more information contact Dalton Kelly, telephone 027 231 0067.