

Working with others to improve health and safety is a key part of the Strategy. A good example is the Yorkshire Rural Support Network, as Network Co-ordinator **Kate Dale** explains.



## Making sure Yorkshire is fit for farming

**T**he Yorkshire Rural Support Network was set up 15 years ago, bringing together both statutory and voluntary sectors to alleviate some of the problems associated with rural living and working.

A lot of farmers were getting illnesses and aches and pains, but wouldn't go to the doctor because of their remoteness and awkward surgery hours. How could we help?

Livestock markets are one of the few places where farmers meet, so we put together a series of health clinics, offering simple health checks, with lots of information for them to take away and read at their leisure.

Our clinics proved a great success, much appreciated by those who attended. But we could do more. There was a real need for a booklet containing simple health advice aimed specifically at the farming community. And so the idea of *Fit for farming* was born.

It takes commitment to drive a project like this forward. Luckily, the Network's members include farming help charities, the regional public health office and HSE – a fantastic pool of knowledge and enthusiasm to draw on. It's a great partnership effort we all gain from. We attend your safety and health awareness days, offering in return a trusted route into the farming community. Everybody wins.

As with any information you produce, it needs to be user-friendly and right for its audience. So we

got a whole range of farmers and their wives involved in deciding on the content and presentation of the booklet. And we included anecdotes from real farmers to keep it relevant and make sure readers could relate to what we were saying.

The end result – a slim, glossy A5 booklet packed with useful information and tips on staying healthy. It's not just aimed at farmers, but their wives and employees, too. It's a permanent reference point we hope will make Yorkshire's rural community more aware of the health issues they face, take steps to live and work more healthily, and visit their GP when problems arise.

As well as handing out the booklet at livestock markets, the regional branch of the National Farmers' Union and publications like *Farmers' Weekly* and *Farmers' Guardian* have helped spread the word. Doctors' surgeries, veterinary practices, mobile libraries and the local clergy also help get the message across.

I'm pleased to say that *Fit for farming* has been very well received. I've heard many tales of farmers visiting their GP with longstanding ailments they haven't found time to get seen to until now.

All our members have made a real contribution to the success of both this particular booklet and the Network in general. It's a great example of how much more you can achieve by working with others.

*I pushed the booklet under my husband's nose. He read it from cover to cover and promptly made an appointment to see our GP the following day.*

*I picked this booklet up at one of the country shows and have shown it to lots of friends. I keep going back to it because I like the farmer quotes and the little highlighted boxes with hints, tips and contact details.*



**What difference is the strategy making on the ground? The following shows how people inside and outside HSE are transforming the strategic goals into real improvements in health and safety.**

### Case study

### Strategy in action

