

HEALTH CLINIC TO LAUNCH AT SEDGEMOOR AUCTION CENTRE

Farmers and anyone working in the farming community, will be able to get a health check as part of their weekly trip to market thanks to the launch of a new health clinic at Sedgemoor Auction Centre in Bridgwater, Somerset.

The Derek Mead Health Room will open on Saturday 14 April in honour of Somerset dairy farmer and auction centre owner, Derek Mead who tragically died in a farming accident last year.

A nurse will be on-hand to carry out essential health checks such as blood pressure monitoring, and blood sugar testing, whilst also offering support for mental health issues. Farmers can pop in to the clinic - which is located next to the auction ring - with no prior appointment and speak to a nurse in confidence.

The health clinic has been set up thanks to the support of various local bodies, who have formed the Health Clinic Steering Group. This includes Greenslade Taylor Hunt, Sedgemoor Auction Centre, Mole Valley Farmers, The Weston Lions Club, Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, The Farming Community Network (FCN), Bridgwater Agricultural Society and The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI).

To date, around £14,500 has been raised by the steering group to fund the health clinic. This is enough to pay for a nurse and a receptionist to run the clinic every fortnight for a couple of years. However, the aim is to raise more funds to make it a weekly service and therefore if anyone would like to make a donation, it would be most gratefully received.

Health professionals are being sourced from the NHS, with the support of the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. If the service proves a success, the ultimate aim is to have it funded by the NHS, which will enable the service to evolve to include an even greater range of services.

Jane Fitzgerald, who will be leading the service for Somerset Partnership says they have been keen to get involved in launching the new clinic - particularly considering the fact farmers are widely recognised as being difficult to contact in terms of health and wellness.

"We expect a lot of the farming community will have a concern about their health," she says. "Maybe they are not feeling well and their partner nags them to go to the GP but they don't have time to go. This is a way to get checked whilst fitting it in with their day-to-day life."

A health clinic had been in existence at the market some years ago, although lack of funding had caused it to close. Prior to his death, Derek had been in the process of re-launching the clinic and had approached John Holland and Eric Tones from the Weston Lions to reform a committee.

John recalls: "Derek was aware of the problems; attempted suicides and friends of his that had experienced a break-down and some that had died and some that weren't looking after themselves. He recognised the value of having a nurse somewhere on neutral territory."

Alistair Mead, Derek's son - says the family are keen to continue what Derek had started. "My sister Katherine and my dad had visited a few auction health clinics around the country and seen that they were busy and in demand. We want to give farmers better access to health advice as it's not easy as a farmer, when you're busy all the time. Farmers support the market, so this is a bit of a return favour," Alistair explains.

Julie Edwards, head of agricultural marketing and communications for Mole Valley Farmers believes the service is hugely valuable. As a result, Mole Valley Farmers has helped with financial support and designing the accompanying logos, artwork and strap-line for the initiative.

Julie explains; “Farmers are stoic, resourceful, self-sufficient and sometimes just a little stubborn, so they always put the farming business and livestock above themselves. This is a great opportunity for them to take five minutes out of their day to see a nurse. And it isn’t restricted to those people living in Somerset – anyone from the farming community, from whichever county can use the service. It could be the best five minutes you spend, in terms of proactively looking after your health.”

>> To find out more about The Derek Mead Health Clinic, call 01278 662200 ext 1 or email: Katharine.Carver@junction24ltd.co.uk

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