

Empowering Rural Australians: Zoetis Supports Mental Health in Regional Australia Through Beyond Blue Partnership

In recent years, Australians in rural and regional areas have faced unprecedented challenges that have taken a toll on mental health and well-being. Factors such as inflation, cost-of-living pressures, climate change, and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored the importance of mental health support, particularly for farmers and rural communities. Recognising the critical need for support, Zoetis has partnered with Beyond Blue to once again champion mental health initiatives in rural Australia.

With a commitment of \$800,000 over the last eight years, Zoetis has been a steadfast supporter of Beyond Blue's vital services, which have seen more than 300,000 individuals reach out for assistance in 2023 alone. In 2024, Zoetis has set a goal to raise an additional \$100,000 by the end of the year by donating \$5 from each sale of the company's livestock, pig, and poultry vaccines and drenches.



"Our partnership with Beyond Blue is more than just financial support," says Lance Williams, Zoetis Senior Vice President, Australia and New Zealand. "It's about fostering a culture of hope and resilience, ensuring that those facing mental health challenges know they are not alone and that help is available."

Over 3.4 million people in Australia are dealing with anxiety or depression, and nearly half of the population will face mental health issues in their lifetime. Not only are Australians living in rural and remote areas disproportionately affected by stress and anxiety, accessing services is significantly harder due to attitudinal, financial, and digital barriers.

Derek Schoen, a Corowa farmer and Beyond Blue board member, emphasises the importance of maintaining hope amidst adversity: "Country people are resilient and tough, but the many challenges we face can take a toll on our mental health. The repeated extreme weather events we've seen at the start of this year have added to these stresses. I would encourage people to not lose hope and to seek support early."

According to research¹ from the National Farmers Federation, nearly a third of farmers have reported a decline in their mental health, citing weather-related disasters (47%), financial stress (36%), and inflation and cost pressures (35%) as top contributors. Alarmingly, close to half of Australian farmers have experienced thoughts of self-harm or suicide, with feelings of loneliness and limited access to mental health services compounding these challenges.

Beyond Blue's Support Service has been instrumental in providing a lifeline to those in distress. After contacting the service, a significant majority of individuals reported feeling heard, understood, and less distressed, highlighting the positive impact of early intervention and support.

The journey to mental health is a collective effort that relies on a foundation of compassion, understanding, and support. Support can be given in many ways, including lending a listening ear. "Every act of kindness, no matter how seemingly small, carries immense significance. Whether it's a simple check-in with a neighbour, a supportive conversation with a friend, or a compassionate gesture towards a work colleague, these actions contribute to building a community where mental health is prioritised and stigma is dismantled," said Mr Williams.

"It's crucial to remember that this journey doesn't have to be a lonely one. By fostering connections and creating safe spaces for open dialogue, we can collectively normalise conversations about mental health and

encourage help-seeking behaviour. It's about recognising that each person's experience is unique and valid, and that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness."

As Australia continues to navigate various challenges, Zoetis remains committed to promoting mental health awareness and supporting initiatives that strengthen the well-being of rural communities. Together with Beyond Blue, Zoetis is harnessing the power of hope to navigate through difficult times and build a brighter, healthier future for all Australians.

People can support the Zoetis initiative between 15 July and 31 October 2024. For each sale of the company's livestock, pig and poultry vaccines and drenches Zoetis, will donate \$5, up to \$100,000, to Beyond Blue. Mr Williams continues, "The money raised goes directly to the Beyond Blue Support Service to continue helping people living in remote areas. To date, thanks to Zoetis's donation, over 15,500 people have been able to get the support they need through the service. Together we have made strong progress in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of those who live in rural Australia, and we are passionate about helping again this year."

For more information on how you can help Zoetis to raise vital funds to support mental health in rural communities through its partnership with Beyond Blue please visit www.zoetis.com.au. For more information about depression and anxiety, visit www.beyondblue.org.au. The [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) offers free and immediate counselling, advice and referrals via phone, webchat or email. To talk to a mental health professional for free, contact the 24/7 Beyond Blue Support Service on 1300 22 46 36. Free web chat is also available 24/7 at beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat and you can join the [Online forums](#) for free.

ⁱ [Farmers in crisis: Depression and anxiety rife among Aussie farmers - National Farmers' Federation \(nff.org.au\)](#)