

# Protect your farm's most important asset. You.

## If you work outside you are at risk

Two out of every three Australians will get skin cancer before the age of 70, leading to more than 1850 deaths annually. In Victoria, more than 350 people will lose their lives to skin cancer each year.

## The good news is most skin cancers can be prevented.

Almost all skin cancer is caused by over-exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Exposure to the sun's UV radiation is a major hazard for anybody who spends long periods of time outdoors.

## Know the enemy



**Basal cell carcinoma**  
This is the most common type of skin cancer, which usually occurs in the upper body. These cancers are often red and slightly raised with a scaly area, which can bleed if knocked. They often become ulcerated as they develop and look unsightly.



**Squamous cell carcinoma**  
These skin cancers are more dangerous than the basal cell carcinomas, as they spread throughout the body. They require treatment and can cause unsightly ulcers and are often red in colour.



**Melanoma**  
These skin cancers are the most dangerous. Melanoma spreads throughout the body and if left untreated can lead to death. They often start as a mole and become darker and have an irregular border.

## Skin cancer – what to look for

Early detection of skin cancer is important as it can often be successfully treated if found early. All Australians should regularly check their skin for suspicious spots. Get to know your skin – what is normal for you and what has changed since the last time you looked.

- Check your whole body: the soles of your feet, between your toes, armpits, ears, eyelids, under your fingernails and scalp.
- Use a hand-held mirror or ask someone to check areas you cannot see such as your back, the back of your neck and legs.
- Look for a new spot or a spot that is different from the ones around it.
- Look for a sore that doesn't heal.
- Look for a spot or mole that has changed in size, shape or colour.

Consult your doctor immediately if you notice anything unusual.

## Your sun protection program

If you're an employer you have a legal responsibility to provide a safe working environment. This includes supplying sun protection to your employees if they have to work outside. And under the legislation, employees are required to co-operate.

Sun protection is important not just when you are working on the farm, but also when you are on holidays or just enjoying time outside. In Victoria, UV Index levels average 3 and above from the beginning of September until the end of April. At that time, you and your family should wear sun-protective clothing, use sunscreen, wear a hat and sunglasses, and seek shade.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
For vitamin D, most people only need a few minutes of sun exposure each day from September to April, and 2 to 3 hours over the week in winter.

## Protect yourself from the sun's UV radiation

Whenever the UV Index level reaches 3 and above, use a combination of these 5 sun protection measures:



**1. SLIP ON SUN-PROTECTIVE CLOTHING**  
Cover as much skin as possible. Long pants and shirts with a collar and long sleeves are best.



**2. SLOP ON SPF 30+ SUNSCREEN**  
It's best to use a broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen. Apply 20 minutes before going outdoors and re-apply every two hours.



**3. SLAP ON A HAT**  
Wear a broad-brimmed hat that provides as much shade as possible to your face, neck and ears.



**4. SEEK SHADE**  
Take breaks under trees or indoors whenever possible.



**5. SLIDE ON SOME SUNGLASSES**  
Wear close fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard.

These steps provide the best protection against UV radiation when used together.

PATIENT HISTORY



## Les's story

**Sure it may not happen to you. Just don't bet the farm on it.**

"My younger brother was a farmer. He died a slow debilitating death after skin cancer got into the nerves in his face and eyes."

At age 57, just six months after his brother's death from skin cancer, Les noticed a tiny lump on his forehead. His GP referred him to a dermatologist who lasered his forehead and removed the lump. Results showed his lump was a merkel cell – an aggressive form of skin cancer.

Les was taken to St Vincent's Hospital where he underwent a seven-hour operation to remove a large mass from his forehead. He had skin removed from his wrist up to his armpit to replace the skin on his forehead. He then had skin removed from his leg to cover what was taken from his arm.

After surgery Les endured weeks of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. He was extremely unwell and could not return to normal working life on the farm.

**"When my son took over the farm it was the saddest day of my life".**

Les's son Paul, who lives 5km away, had to take over the running of the farm. Paul reduced his own contracting business to take care of his dad. Les's daughter and her family moved back home, as Les lived alone and was unable to cope.

"If I have one message for farmers, it would be to not put things off and not put their families through what we've been through. It's so easy to prevent skin cancer, but can cost so much if you're not careful. Farmers really should make an effort to protect themselves".

**Les Colman**  
Kotupna, VIC



farm

### Can you afford to take unexpected time off?

If you're a farmer or work outdoors, you have a higher than average risk of skin cancer. Treatments for skin cancer will vary depending on the type of cancer, as well as how early it is detected. Not all skin cancers can be burnt off, cut out or treated with creams. Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, can require surgery, radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy. This may mean time off work, away from your farm and away from your family.

### Detecting UV radiation

Many people use temperature to determine when to use sun protection. This is a misconception. Temperature is a result of the sun's infra-red rays (heat) and is not related to the amount of UV radiation present. When the temperature is cool, it means less intense infra-red rays but not necessarily less UV radiation. To determine the UV levels each day, use the SunSmart UV Alert.



### SunSmart UV Alert

The sun's UV radiation is both a major cause of skin cancer and a great natural source of vitamin D. We need to balance the risk of skin cancer from too much sun exposure with maintaining adequate vitamin D levels. The SunSmart UV Alert helps you to know when to use sun protection and when to get some sun for vitamin D.

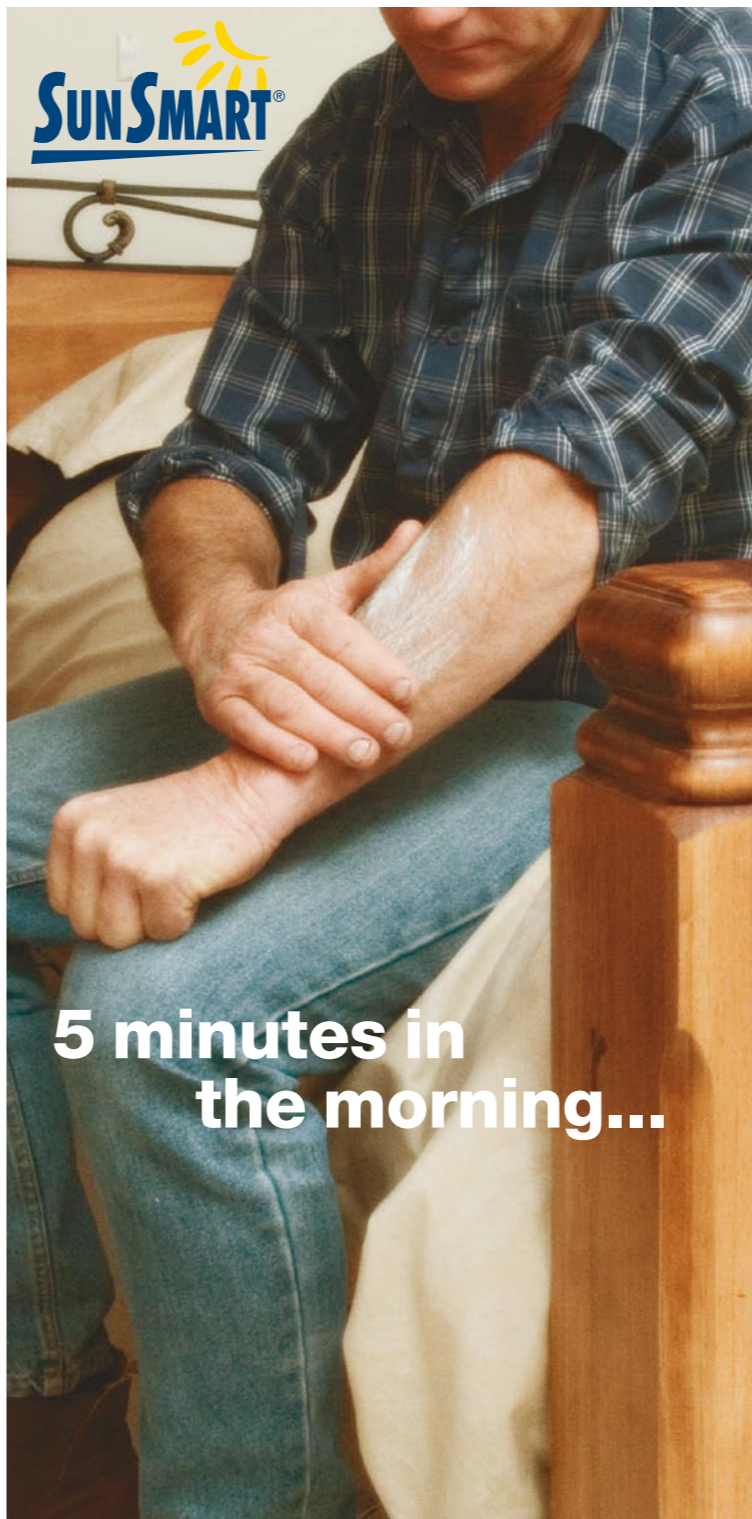
In Victoria sun protection is needed when the UV Index reaches 3 and above. At this level, UV is strong enough to damage your skin and eyes and increase your risk of skin cancer. When the UV Index is below 3, sun protection is not required unless you're outside for extended periods of time, in alpine areas or near highly reflective surfaces such as snow.

Check the SunSmart UV Alert every day on the weather page of your daily newspaper, at [sunsmart.com.au](http://sunsmart.com.au) or download a free SunSmart iPhone app from iTunes.

Visit [sunsmart.com.au](http://sunsmart.com.au) or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.



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5 minutes in the morning...



...or 5 months off the