

...dence survey reveals a third of Victorian farmers are pessimistic about the near future, with many worried the coronavirus pandemic will continue to affect agriculture in Australia and overseas, and particu-

...heavy reliance on the service industry, global demand for lamb had taken a hit.

"And with the relative high prices we've been having over the past few years, we have seen a retracement in the

...our sheep meat sales and there seems a willingness from Australian consumers to support local butchers and domestic red meat," Mr Crisp said.

Dairy and grains farmers remained positive about this season's prospects given

Farmers in southwest Victoria and the Wimmera/Mallee were the most pessimistic about the season ahead given the recent downturn in wool pricing.

● **How the pandemic is affecting agriculture, Page 11**

DISEASES SPREADING

Climate, pest link

By NATALIE KOTSIOS

CLIMATE change is leading to new pest distribution and will spark new potentially deadly diseases, threatening Australia's agricultural sector and biosecurity, the nation's most experienced vets are warning.

And if the federal government doesn't take serious climate action now, more diseases could jump from animals to humans, as did the current coronavirus pandemic, the veterinarians say.

The group of 18 former chief veterinary officers from across

EXCLUSIVE

Australia have today issued an open letter to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, urging the government to adopt a target of net-zero emissions by 2050.

They argue pest and disease distribution among animals has changed due to shifting climate zones and habitat destruction.

"Governments listened to and valued our scientific advice when we served as chief veterinary officers," the letter reads.

"We urge you now to ... listen to and act on the best ad-

vice from climate scientists."

Among the signatories is Dr Hugh Millar, who served as Victoria's chief vet for 12 years until 2012, and was key in keeping equine influenza out of the state in 2007.

Dr Millar said changing ecosystems and habitat disruption were increasing the risk of emerging diseases, with 60-70 per cent of all new human diseases in recent decades shown to have originated from animals.

The vets are not suggesting COVID-19 arose due to climate change; rather, they argue changing climate will in-

creasingly be a factor in how diseases emerge.

"Anything that disrupts natural ecosystems is going to change the relationship between animal and human pathogens," Dr Millar said.

He said it was already being seen in shifting patterns of pests and diseases in animals, particularly those spread by insects. Twenty years ago Queensland fruit fly was infrequently found in Victoria - now it "lives happily all year round" as it winters in parts of Australia it didn't before.

● **Climate action 'urgent', Page 14**



FARM TRANSPORTATION HAS EVOLVED

There was a time when farm transportation was simply a way to get around, but like most things on the farm, this has evolved a lot over the years. The right vehicle is now a key factor in getting more done, more quickly and doing it safely.

The evolution of off-road vehicles has been significant - from the horse, to the ag bike, the 3-wheeler, the quad and now Side x Side vehicles - to the point that last year more Side x Sides were sold than ag quad bikes in Australia. This evolution, particularly the transference from quads to Side x Sides, has created a whole new way of working, with greater functionality, capability, safety and comfort, to the point you can now get a vehicle with a fully-sealed cab, heating and air-conditioning.

Polaris is Australia's #1 selling off-road vehicle brand with over 30 models with Roll Over Protection Structures (ROPS) and is turning this evolution into a revolution with its Ranger utility Side x Side line-up. Polaris Ranger models offer the choice of petrol, diesel or electric and