

Looking to diversify your farm business? Box Hill Institute is here to help

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For farming businesses looking to diversify, particularly into the agritourism sector, there are many factors to consider, and new skills required. These include promotion and marketing of the business, product development, legal obligations and compliance, to name a few, as well as the potential for exposing their operations to new risks, such as biosecurity threats.

Box Hill Institute in Lilydale, Victoria, in collaboration with industry, has identified a gap in training resources specifically targeted towards the agritourism industry and diversified agricultural businesses. In response to this, Dr Mick Blake (Director, Biosecurity Centre of Excellence, BHI) and his team have developed two new online courses, a *Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Agritourism Operations*.

Mick explains that one of the key drivers for developing these courses were concerns from industry that new agritourism ventures needed to consider things such as biosecurity risk to their businesses. Additionally, for those wanting to diversify from a purely agricultural enterprise to a public-facing agritourism business it is not just as simple as 'throwing open the gates to the farm'. There are many other issues to consider, such as compliance and legislative requirements, and public safety and liability.

These courses have been designed to suit people interested in setting up an agritourism business on their farming property, agritourism business operators who would like to further develop their skills, and those interested in a career in agritourism and wanting to gain relevant qualifications.

The courses cover broad areas such as:

- **Transition planning for diversification/agritourism**
- **Promoting and developing agritourism products and marketing**
- **Agritourism risk, biosecurity awareness and compliance processes**

The *Diploma/Advanced Diploma of Agritourism Operations* aim to address these knowledge gaps for individuals and businesses looking to diversify, and provide students with the skills needed to plan, develop and manage a successful agritourism enterprise. The online components of the courses include interviews with agritourism businesses from Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales to create 'virtual mentors' to share their experiences, both good and bad, in the agritourism sector.

For an overview and tour of these courses, go to studentweb.bhtafe.edu.au/agritourism

The qualifications have been designed to allow students the freedom and flexibility to learn in a place and time that suits them through blended delivery of online and/or face-to-face teaching. Students can complete the courses completely online and remotely, making them accessible to those outside of Victoria.

Box Hill Institute has also delivered a fully online Undergraduate Certificate in Biosecurity Science, in association with the Institute's Biosecurity Centre of Excellence during 2020-2021. This certificate is a 'micro qualification' designed to increase understanding of biosecurity science and regulation, and also provides a pathway into the Bachelor of Biosecurity Science.

The Undergraduate Certificate focuses on the skills necessary to

- **Protect our farms, livestock and crops from pests and diseases**
- **Implement biosecurity surveillance and monitoring methodologies**
- **Prepare and communicate plans for emergency response to biosecurity threats**

This certificate is currently delivered online, over 13 weeks, allowing students flexibility in their learning, and will hopefully continue after 2021. For more information on these courses go to www.boxhill.edu.au