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Research proves olives contain the good oil

By WILL JACKSON

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JIGGI olive grower Denise Hodgson is excited to see encouraging results coming from Southern Cross University research into the therapeutic effects of olive leaf extract.

As a part-time olive farmer at Jiggi for Summerland Olives, and a practising nurse, Mrs Hodgson finds the natural product's medicinal qualities fascinating.

She already sells a form of olive leaf extract as a potent antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal agent, but it could have much wider application, she said.

"So many treatments have negative side effects, so it is great if they can find a natural substance that doesn't," she said.

The SCU scientists announced last Friday that they had proven the extract was lethal to human breast and prostate cells in the laboratory.

However, principle researcher Dr Lesley Ste-

venson said a great deal of additional work needed to be done to confirm the findings.

Once that was done, they could begin extensive clinical trials, she said.

The current study is being conducted by the Australian Centre for Complementary Medicine Education and Research using an extract produced by Olive Leaf Australia, different to the product Mrs Hodgson sells.

Dr Stevenson, manager of the Natural Products Pharmacology Unit at Southern Cross University, said that in a separate aspect of the study the extract was found to help fight inflammation.

The new findings follow research last year which found the extract had four times as many antioxidants as vitamin C.

Dr Stevenson said it could possibly be used to treat diseases such as arthritis.



EXCITING FINDINGS: Alan and Denise Hodgson and their dog Bilkie on their Jiggi olive farm. The couple sell olive leaf extract from their crop at the Lismore Farmers' Market.

Picture: GEMMA-ROSE TURNBULL