



Farm Safety Association

Agriculture • Agribusiness • Horticulture • Landscaping

SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN AGRICULTURE

Children living and growing up in the farm workplace continue to be exposed to hazards that can lead to serious injury or death. Approximately 20% of fatalities on Ontario farms involving farm work are children under the age of fifteen. Many of these children were not performing work duties but were merely in the workplace for various reasons.

On a farm, powerful machinery, tools, chemicals, confined spaces, ponds, animals and motor vehicles are some of the potential hazards. Most serious injuries suffered by farm children and adults involve machinery.

Parents need to create “hazard-free” play areas to protect their children. A farm cannot be considered a giant playground. Boundaries and limits need

to be set for such play areas. View your farm from your child’s perspective. Get down on their level and look up, down and all around. In many cases children will be performing various work related tasks when they reach an appropriate age. In these cases stick adult supervision is required.

Farm parents can take these precautions to prevent children from getting hurt on the farm:

- **Find out what the developmental characteristics of children are at specific ages.** Child development guidelines are available that give abilities of children at different ages. These characteristics help to identify typical risks.
- **Identify the dangerous areas on your farm.** Determine where kids are most likely to get hurt on the farm. Determine what draws children to dangerous situations. An example: Toddlers are especially at risk to pesticide poisoning because of their curiosity, tendency to put things into their mouths, inability to read labels, and budding independence.
- **Set up appropriate rules for children to follow.** Remember that very young children cannot understand the concept of rules but as children grow they begin to understand the reasons for guidelines



and the consequences for not following them. Be consistent in enforcement of rules.

- **Supervise children according to their age.** Very young children need constant supervision. Children must prove they are capable of following the farm rules before they are allowed to perform farm tasks.

HAZARD-FREE PLAY AREA

- Children should have a place to play where they are protected from the daily hazards of farm life. This area should be away from the driveway and buildings.

Everyone on the farm should know where this area is and make sure the children use it. The area should be free of broken and unsafe equipment. Make it a place children will enjoy and use. Areas could include a sand box, swing set, backyard or porch. Know where your kids are at all times!

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

- Children love animals, but animals don’t always love children. Children need to be taught how to handle and work around animals to lessen potential hazards.
- Household pets can be as dangerous as farm animals. Respect for all animals should be one of the first things taught to young children. Keep livestock in the appropriate pens or fenced areas.

- Children need to be aware of their location so they do not end up behind an animal and get stepped on or kicked. Running or screaming around animals can cause the animal to become spooked, which could lead to an injury.
- Children also need to be warned to stay away from any farm animal with its young. A new mother can quickly turn on a child if she feels her young are threatened.

When working around animals encourage your children to:

- Be calm, move slowly, and avoid loud noises. Wear steel-toed shoes. Avoid the hind legs of the animal.
- Approach large animals at the shoulder. Children should avoid handling stallions, bulls, rams, and boars. Always have an escape route when working with animals in close quarters. Wear helmets when riding horses.

STORAGE BUILDINGS AND BARN

- Buildings of any kind pose hazards for children. Be aware of potential hazards in the various buildings on the farm and take measures to lessen them.
- Lock up chemicals and dispose of containers properly, put ladders out of reach and do not lean heavy objects against walls.



- Good housekeeping is the first step in safety. Inspect your farm for objects, which could fall and injure a child. Example: tractor tires leaning against the barn could prove hazardous.

Test your garage door opener. Use a two-inch thick piece of wood at the bottom and close the door. If the door does not reverse, disengage it and fix or replace the opener as soon as possible.

RIDING AND PLAYING ON EQUIPMENT

Safety starts with adults. Children will imitate adult behavior whether it's safe or not. Make sure proper safety procedures become a part of everyday life.

- Wear seat belts when driving, and fasten small children in approved child safety seats in your vehicles. Wear a helmet when riding an all terrain vehicle (ATV).
- Children should not operate machinery until they are completely trained. This includes lawn mowers and

ATV's. Once trained, make sure children always follow safety rules.

- Make sure the size of the ATV fits the child. Get your child into the habit of wearing a helmet, long pants, eye protection, gloves and boots when riding an ATV.
- Children are fascinated with big vehicles. Big vehicles can lead to accidents due to visibility problems. Do not allow children to ride or play on tractors or other pieces of farm machinery. Adults need to take certain precautions if an unsupervised child plays on equipment.
- Remove the ignition keys from parked equipment and lock the brakes.
- Front-end loaders, buckets or other such equipment that might fall should be left in the down position.
- When parked, self-propelled machinery should be locked and dangerous machinery components should be kept out of reach of children. Disengage your tractor's Power Take-Off (PTO) when idle or not in use.
- Children should be taught where and how to turn off all farm machinery.

If a person becomes entangled, a child could save his/her life by turning off the equipment and then getting help.

PLANTS AND GARDENING

- Children love to play with plants in the yard. Children need to know outdoor plants may be played with but not eaten. Pick and dispose of mushrooms in the yard. Explain to children they are not the same as those purchased in the grocery store and should never be eaten.
- Gardening is often a family activity. Store seeds and bulbs out of reach of children until they are to be used. When fruits and vegetables are ready to be harvested, pick them with the children.
- Children may confuse good food with food that is harmful. Always wash fruits and vegetables before eating them, and teach children to do the same.



WATER

There may be water hazards on the farm. Never leave small children unsupervised in or near water, including ponds, swimming pools and stock watering tanks. If possible, it is a good idea for children to take swimming lessons. This does not alleviate the need for supervision, but gives children more confidence around water. Be sure to secure wellhead covers, dug wells and abandoned wells.

POISONS AND MEDICINES

- There are ways to keep these deadly hazards out of the hands of children.
- Always store foods and household cleaning products separately.
- Make certain that foods cannot be mistaken for household cleaning products. Keep all products in their original containers.
- Never transfer poisonous products to other containers, such as jars or bottles.
- Purchase products packaged in childproof containers. After using these poisonous products, immediately return them to their storage area. It is a good idea to keep them locked up. Child-resistant safety latches can be put on doors and cabinets to keep little hands out of them.
- Poisonous gases can harm children in the home. Make sure kerosene and oil-burning heaters are properly working. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, deadly gas emitted by these heaters if they are not working correctly.

To prevent accidental exposure to chemicals follow these guidelines:

- Always keep pesticides in locked storage and in their original, labeled container. This is one of the most important safety rules. Chemicals found in the home include household cleaners, insect sprays, kerosene, lighter fluid, furniture polishers, turpentine, paints, solvents, products containing lye and acids, and pet shampoos and treatments.
- Instruct children about warning signs and items that they are suppose to stay away from. Be a good role model when using chemicals by using proper protective clothing. Discard all empty chemical containers and measuring utensils properly.
- Remove children and toys from the area when applying chemicals.
- Keep the telephone number of the poison control center close to the phone and instruct children about proper emergency procedures.
- Wash chemical-soiled clothing separate from the rest of the laundry.
- If interrupted while working with chemicals, close all containers and put out of reach of children.

Farm chemicals are not for use by children or youth.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A POISONING

Children by nature will eat and drink almost anything. The best way to help your child is to know what to do.

Children act fast; so do poisons.

- One of the first things you should do is post your local Poison Control Center phone number near all telephones. Also post the telephone numbers for the ambulance, local or closest hospital, and your family physician. Make family members aware of them.
- If a poisoning occurs, try to determine the poison taken and part of the body affected before you take action. Remember, taking the right action is as important as taking immediate action.
- Read the "Statement of Treatment" on the product involved in the poisoning and administer the suggested initial first aid

TASKS

- Take all children on a tour of the farm and point out dangerous areas.
- Take young worker's physical and mental development into account when assigning jobs.
- Each task has its hazards, and children should be taught to avoid them. Teach them how to do the job safely and watch them do it.
- Provide needed protective equipment.
- **Do not assign a youngster a job better suited to adult skills.**

Tasks that are appropriate for children include:

- **Preschool:** household clean up, watering plants, feeding small animals.
- **Age 6-11:** hand tools are appropriate- not power tools, feeding animals, (under supervision) weeding, watering and picking; lawn mowing with a push mower on a flat surface, hand raking and digging.
- **Ages 12-14:** limited power tools under supervision
- **Age 15-18:** can start to do adult jobs under supervision.



FIREARMS

- Firearms and ammunition need to be stored where children cannot reach them.
- Never store loaded guns.
- Store ammunition in a locked place, separate from the firearms.
- Use locks on the firearms that children can't operate, and store firearms inside a locked cabinet.

ELECTRICITY

- Children need to be taught electrical safety, and as a role model parents need to use electricity wisely.
- Keep faceplates on switches and outlets. Keep electrical panels free of dust and debris.
- Keep electrical panels covered to reduce shock and fire hazard.
- Use properly maintained tools and equipment that is double insulated. Don't use electrical tools around water.
- Equip the shop area with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters and use 3-prong grounding plugs.
- Use undamaged electrical cords and don't carry tools by their cords.
- Grip the plug, not the cord, to unplug a tool.
- Switch off and unplug a tool before you change parts or clean it, or if it begins to smoke or burn.
- Instruct children in proper behavior around and respect of electricity.

GRAIN, SILAGE AND MANURE

- It is essential that children know that they should not enter a silo or grain bin to rescue another person.

If someone is caught in one of these structures and a child enters, then they too can become trapped. The child does need to know how to turn off an operating auger and turn on a fan, if one is present, and then get assistance.

The following are a few rules you may want to implement to prevent your farm family from becoming a tragic statistic due to grain incidents:

- Mark all potentially dangerous areas, such as grain bins, wagons and trucks, with decals or brightly colored markers. Children need to learn to recognize danger
- Always lock accesses doors to grain storage structures.
- Lock out power to all types of grain-handling equipment.
- Always use the buddy system when you are unloading or loading grain, notifying a second person where you are.

- Never permit children to ride in grain wagons or enter grain storage areas.
- Always know where all family members are (especially children) at all times when grain is being loaded, unloaded, moved or otherwise handled.

To prevent exposure to the dangers of manure gas everyone in the family should follow these rules:

- Never enter a manure pit. Label manure pits and manure storage areas to warn of the hazards.
- Never enter a building when manure is being agitated (mixed) for removal.
- Always use maximum building ventilation during manure agitation. Be sure manure pit covers are secure and in good repair. Be sure all lagoons are adequately fenced
- Obtain and use monitoring equipment to determine the level of gases present.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL FAMILY MEMBERS TAKE A FIRST-AID COURSE

Very often it is a family member who is the first on the scene of a farm accident. If this person knows how to properly respond to the emergency situation it could mean the difference between life and death. Therefore, any time spent learning first aid is time well spent.

PROPERLY CLOTHE CHILDREN WHO WILL BE PLAYING AROUND THE FARM.

- Appropriate footwear (boots or shoes without long laces), jeans, long sleeve shirt and hat are recommended.
- Don't get burned! One serious childhood or adolescent sunburn doubles the chances of developing skin cancer. The sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The information and recommendations contained in this publication are believed to be reliable and representative of contemporary expert opinion on the subject material. The Farm Safety Association Inc. does not guarantee absolute accuracy or sufficiency of subject material, nor can it accept responsibility for health and safety recommendations that may have been omitted due to particular and exceptional conditions and circumstances.

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