



**Farm Safety Association**  
**March 2000**  
**Tailgate-Sun**

## Protect yourself against the sun

**Instructor:** *The following script can be used to deliver a 15-minute training session to employees. It would be a good idea to use some props (e.g. sunscreen, sunglasses, protective hat, etc.) You can demonstrate how various items can be used to minimize exposure to skin-damaging solar radiation.*

*The text emphasizes the most important points of "sun safety" It is suggested that you try to stay strictly on topic. Obviously, you will need to be prepared to answer questions.*

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

- Repeated exposure to the sun can increase the risk of developing skin cancer in the future.
- Solar radiation is strongest between 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.
- Always "cover up" and apply a sunscreen if you will be working outside for more than a few minutes.
- Select a sunscreen rated SPF 15 or greater.

#### Be aware of the danger

A lot of farm work involves being outdoors when the sun's radiation is most intense. Repeated daily exposure to the sun over a number of years increases an individual's risk of developing a number of health problems, including:

- Aging, wrinkling, and drying out of the skin.
- Skin cancer.
- Lip cancer.
- Damage to the eyes.

Fair skinned individual's are at greatest risk. However, excessive exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can even be harmful if you have dark hair and dark skin.

Did you know that it is even possible to get sun-burned on a cloudy day?

#### Take steps to protect yourself

Solar radiation is strongest between 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. It's especially important to protect your skin against the sun during these hours.

- Try to limit your time in the sun. That can be tough in the farm workplace! If you have to work outside all day, take your breaks indoors, if possible. At least try to get into the shade for a few minutes every hour.
- Liberally apply sunscreen lotion on the face, neck, hands, forearms, ears, and any other unprotected skin. Use a product with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- Put sunscreen on before heading outdoors. Reapply the lotion as required during the day.
- Eye damage can result from prolonged exposure to the sun. Always wear sunglasses that filter out

at least 90 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Choose the right clothing to protect the rest of the body. You *won't* be more comfortable without a shirt! Remember, today's tan could lead to serious skin health problems in the future.

1. Cover up as much as possible. Lightweight, tightly-woven shirts and long pants will block most of the sun's rays. Light coloured cotton is most comfortable under hot summer conditions. Garments should fit comfortably and not be too tight. However, loose or floppy clothes should *not* be worn if there is any chance you will be working around machinery.

2. You must wear a hat. It should shade the ears, face, temples, and back of the neck. Standard baseball caps don't offer much protection against the sun. You need to add a neck shade to protect the back of the neck and the ears. The best choices in head gear include pith helmets—that's right, just like the ones they wear in the jungle—and straw hats with extra wide brims.

#### Learn to recognize skin problems

We all need to check our skin regularly for signs of damage that could indicate a health problem. Take a close look at the top of your head, face, lips, and the tips of your ears. Use a full length mirror for a "head-to-toe" inspection.

Look for the following during your skin check.

1. Changes in the size, shape, or colour of moles. In particular, watch for:
  - irregular borders on moles (ragged, notched, or blurred edges).

- moles that aren't symmetrical (one half doesn't match the other).
  - colours that aren't uniform throughout.
  - moles that are bigger than a pencil eraser.
2. Also be on the lookout for:
- sores that bleed and don't heal.
  - a change in the sensation of a mole, such as itchiness or pain.
  - red patches or lumps. Don't overlook the top of the head.
  - new moles.

Any of the above could be an indication of skin cancer. If caught early, it can usually be treated quite effectively. If you suspect a problem, see your doctor!

**Do what the experts do!**

You likely have seen documentaries or Hollywood

films that depict tribesmen in the Sahara Desert. These folks are always completely covered up with clothing, despite living in one of the most blistering hot environments on earth. Think they're just being modest? Hardly! They know the damage that the sun's rays can do to the skin, and that's why they keep themselves covered.

Protecting the skin and eyes against the sun is one of the best things you can do to protect your future health.

**Are there any questions?**

**Finally, let's take a moment to review some of the "Do's" and "Don'ts" of protecting yourself against the sun.**

<b>DO:</b>	<b>DON'T:</b>
Always wear a hat that completely shades the ears, face, and neck.	Consider a suntan to be "cool", or a sign of health.
Use a sunscreen with SPF of 15 or greater.	Use sun lamps, tanning beds, or other artificial tanning devices.
Always wear sunglasses to protect your eyes against ultraviolet rays.	Ignore skin changes that could be cancerous.

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.

Copyright © 2000

Farm Safety Association Inc.  
22-340 Woodlawn Road West, Guelph, Ontario N1H 7K6 (519) 823-5600

Produced with the assistance of:



Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada

Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada



Canadian Coalition for  
Agricultural safety and rural Health  
Coalition canadienne pour la sécurité  
agricole et la santé rurale



Ministry of  
Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs

Ontario