

DON'T MIX WORKSITE AND CHILD CARE

Most childhood farm injuries occur to non-working kids



It's common to see young children in the farm worksite. Parents say they allow children in the worksite so they can spend time together, keep an eye on a child while getting work done, help instill a good work ethic, foster interest in farming, and provide opportunities for fun.¹

The outcome can be tragic

- A 6-year-old girl falls off a tractor driven by her father and is run over by the trailing mower. She survives, but undergoes multiple amputations.
- A 2-year-old boy dies of head injuries after being trampled by cows in the family's milking shed. The parents had placed the boy in a room in the milking shed while they went about their tasks, and did not notice when the boy walked out.
- A 4-year-old riding on the running board of a sod-cutting tractor being driven by his

7-year-old brother either jumps or falls and is run over and killed.

What do these news stories have in common? A young child is in the farm worksite.

"The majority of childhood agricultural injuries and fatalities occur to young children who are present, and sometimes playing, in farm work areas," said Barbara Lee, Ph.D., director of the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety in Marshfield, Wis.

Consider the consequences

Children are curious and perceive the farm as a gigantic playground. But children do not recognize or understand dangers and cannot easily remember rules from situation to situation.² They may ask to ride on a tractor or tag along with busy moms and dads doing farm tasks, "but as much as we

value parents and children sharing high-quality experiences, a parent or supervising adult must consider the consequences of his or her decisions," Lee said.

Every three days a child dies in an agricultural-related incident in the United States, and every day 33 children are injured. Major sources of fatal injuries are machinery, motor vehicles, and drowning, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Tractor injuries alone account for one-third of all deaths.

Separation is key

In traditional farm settings, the line between worksite and home can be blurred. In other situations, hired farm workers often have no easy child care options. Regardless, children not actively engaged in appropriate work tasks should be physically separated from the work setting.³ Separation could include a fenced outdoor play area away from hazards, an indoor play area or, best yet, off-farm child care.

"Children depend on us - as parents, as farmers, as medical providers and as safety professionals to keep them safe," Lee said.

References

1. Pryor SK, Carruth AK, McCoy CA. Children's injuries in agriculture related events: the effect of supervision on the injury experience. *Issues Compr Pediatr Nurs.* 2002;25:189-205.
2. Esser N, Heiberger S, Ellis T, Salzwedel M, Lee B (editors). *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms*. Fourth edition. Marshfield, WI: Marshfield Clinic.
3. Childhood Agricultural Injuries: An Update for Clinicians. Wright S, Marlenga B, Lee BC. *Curr Probl Pediatr Adolesc Health Care.* 2013;43:20-44.

