Playing Safe on the Farm Meeting Kit

COMMON HAZARDS

Common hazards include drowning in dams, tanks and creeks, injury from guns or chemicals, accidents with tractors, quad bikes, motorbikes, machinery, and animals, and falls from heights. The main risk factors are inexperience with equipment or animals, attempting to perform a task that is beyond their abilities, farm chores and open bodies of water.

THE MAIN RISKS FOR CHILDREN

- Animals can be unpredictable, especially if startled or protecting their young.
- Children lack the judgement to deal with animals safely and don’t have the size, speed and dexterity to get out of the way safely. Children can also get animal diseases like leptospirosis, ringworm and campylobacter.
- Children lack the judgement, body weight and strength to handle full-sized farm vehicles like quad bikes.
- Younger children need to understand that they can be injured when playing on or near tractors. Older children are likely to be injured as passengers or while carrying out farm tasks.
- Have a map of all the water hazards on the property – rivers, creeks, troughs, dips, tanks, dams and ponds. Water can also burn, especially in the dairy shed where hot water is used at scalding temperatures.
- Farm machinery guards may have holes small enough for children’s hands.
- It is the adult’s responsibility to make sure dangerous agri-chemicals are out of reach of children.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE OF CHILD SAFETY ON THE FARM IS IN THE FARM EMERGENCY PLAN

- Ensure easy access to a suitable and well-stocked first aid kit.
- Make sure at least one person on the farm is trained in first aid.
- Keep emergency numbers and correct addresses next to the telephone.
- Plan routes to the nearest hospital with an emergency department.
- Regularly talk through your emergency plan with your family and other workers.
- Make sure your children understand what to do in an emergency.

CONDUCT EFFECTIVE SAFETY AUDITS

An important way to promote safety with children is to conduct periodic safety audits of your farm and home. By targeting and correcting hazards, parents take a major step toward protecting their children from unnecessary tragedy. **Farm safety inspection checklists** and related information that can be used by parents and farm families for auditing purposes.

- Children should be involved in the audit to increase their safety awareness and knowledge of injury prevention.
- Think about past “close calls” or potential future situations that might cause injuries. Determine the factors that were or could be responsible for a near-miss and attempt to explain those factors to children who are mature enough to understand.

FARM CHORES

Have your child do chores and activities that are appropriate for

his or her age and stage of development. Make sure children are:

- supervised.
- always in a safe place
- properly trained
- always wearing the right safety gear
- not operating farm machinery (e.g., tractors, ATVs) until 16 years old

If you show a child how to do a job, it is easier to learn. A responsible adult must always supervise.

OLDER CHILDREN FARM RULES

Suggestions to encourage responsibility and caution in older children include:

- Teach safety rules that apply to the different areas of the farm.
- Make sure children understand that certain areas are out-of-bounds for them – for example silos, grain loading areas, farm machinery and animal pens.
- Be consistent, and if a child breaks the rules, firmly re-explain the hazards and consequences.

SUPERVISION! SUPERVISION! SUPERVISION!

Although performing a thorough safety inspection and Job Safety Analysis are important steps to prevent injuries and fatalities, appropriate supervision is still the best preventive measure. Small children must always be supervised. It is not enough to tell them to “stay away.” Young children want to be with their parents and often forget what they have been told when they see mom and dad working in the field or driving a tractor. Always remember that helping children learn is a slow process that requires patience and understanding—rules and instructions may have to be repeated each time a child performs a job or is in a potentially hazardous situation. Providing this kind of constant supervision

and instruction is often difficult, though. Many farm parents hold jobs away from the farm, and there are times when parents must work to get the chores done. Accordingly, parents should anticipate the need for child care, determine how long that care will be needed, and make arrangements in advance.

TAKEAWAYS

- Children are not small adults and perceive things differently to adults.
- Children have less strength, co-ordination and understanding of situations than adults.
- Children want to explore, try new things, and push boundaries.
- It’s fun to play on a farm, but farms are not playgrounds.

FINAL WORD

Farming is not just an occupation but a way of life. A very high value is placed upon the traditions that farming families have created and maintained throughout many generations. Perhaps someday farming will become a less dangerous occupation rather than being one of the most dangerous.