



Children on the Farm

The High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety

An Accident Waiting to Happen

There are nearly 1.7 million children under 20 years of age living on farms and ranches in the United States. Farm children are often needed and expected to help with chores or handle responsibilities at a young age. Due to this fact, and the nature of farming, they are exposed to potentially dangerous situations much more frequently than children in towns or cities. Here are some startling statistics about child safety on the farm:

- An estimated 300 children die each year in farming accidents
- Farm children are twice as likely to die from an accident than their urban counterparts
- An estimated 30,000 children under 20 years of age are injured each year in farming accidents
- If children who visit or work on non-family farms are added the total is estimated to be close to 100,000 injuries
- Nearly 950 farm children suffer some type of permanent disability because of farm accidents annually
- Approximately 90% of the fatalities and injuries occur to male children
- Children under the age of 16 comprise 20% of all farm fatalities

The three primary agents responsible for deaths and injuries to children on the farm are: tractors, farm machinery, and livestock. It is important to realize that children on farms may be exposed to other situations capable of producing health hazards in the future. Some of these exposures are: noise, vibration, pesticides, dangerous gasses, and airborne irritants.

Tractors

Tractors are the leading cause of farm fatalities for adults and children. Researchers have found that 50% of all fatalities on the farm involved tractors. The following list contains frequent types of tractor accidents:

- Rollovers
- Run overs
- Collisions with other vehicles on roads
- Crushing accidents
- Falls

An important fact to consider is that nearly all accidents and injuries are preventable. Here are some tractor safety tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Retrofit all tractors manufactured before 1985 with a rollover protection structure (ROPS) and a seat belt.
- Train all tractor operators regarding appropriate operational guidelines for both on- and off-road activities.
- Always know where all family members and coworkers are when moving equipment and machinery
- Never leave the keys in a tractor when not in close proximity
- Do not leave the tractor running while performing activities on the ground
- **Do not allow riders at any time.**

Farm Machinery

Farm accidents involving machinery are the second leading cause of fatalities and injuries in children. Farm machinery has moving parts that may pinch, wrap, shear, crush, or pull-in a curious child. Most of us have heard stories of children getting caught in grain augers or PTO shafts and losing an arm or a leg. It is extremely important that children not be allowed around machinery until they are capable of recognizing the hazards associated with it and know the practices necessary for safe operation. Before a child is allowed near farm machinery, the following issues should be addressed:



- Discuss the potential hazards for all machinery the child may be around
- Make sure that all machine guards are in place and the equipment is working properly
- Loose fitting clothing should not be worn around machinery
- If a jam up occurs, shut off the power and get help. Many accidents happen when people take a calculated risk, such as stepping over a PTO shaft or removing corn stalks from the combine head while the machinery is running.

Livestock

Many farms and ranches also have horses. Horses or bulls cause the most severe injuries. Due to the large size of many farm animals, the injuries may be severe. The most common types of accidents involving children and livestock are:

- Crush accidents - often occur when a child gets pinned between a large animal and an immovable object such as a wall or fence.
- Kicks
- Bites
- Falls from horses

To prevent accidents between livestock and children follow these safety tips:

- Keep children away from livestock until they are capable of understanding animal instincts and habits
- Never allow children in pens or fenced areas with livestock
- Chore responsibilities need to match the physical and mental capabilities of the child
- Require children to wear certified equestrian helmets when riding horses
- Closely supervise all activities around livestock

The future of farming in Colorado and the U.S. will soon be in the hands of our children. By following some basic safety principles we can help make sure they are able to farm.

The recommendations listed below will hopefully prevent any of our children from becoming a statistic:

- Provide barriers to prevent young children from wandering into roads and around machinery and restrict access to certain areas and structures
- Discuss as a family the hazards involved with farming
- Set a good example - children often mimic adult behavior
- Do not allow riders on tractors



