

Meat the Future

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“Farm Safety & Our Youth”

It is no secret that farming can be a dangerous occupation. With the school year quickly coming to a close, many of our local youth will have a stronger presence on family farms and some in a job working for a local farmer. During this time, it is important that we invest in agricultural safety. When we encourage our children to focus on safety and health in agricultural communities, we are able to save lives and resources through the prevention of injuries and time lost on the job.

According to the National Ag Safety Database, it is estimated that 104 children younger than the age of 20 are fatally injured from agricultural injuries on U.S. farms and ranches per year. Children and adolescents account for nearly 20 percent of farm fatalities (National Committee for Childhood Injury Prevention, 1996). An estimated 27,000 children who live on farms and ranches are seriously injured on the farm each year. When children who visit or work on non-family farms are taken into account, that number quickly skyrockets to 100,000 children injured on the farm. (Pennsylvania State University, 2014).

Taking these alarming statistics into consideration, how can serious and fatal on-farm injuries be minimized? In this article you will find several farm safety tips that I have gathered from a variety of sources.

1. **Farm Work is Noisy Work** – There are many loud noises associated with a farm, tractors idling, barn cleaners, conveyers and grain elevators for example are all in the decibel danger zone. Loud noises can affect health in many ways, one of the most common is permanent hearing loss (hearing loss due to frequent exposure to high decibel ranges is irreversible and cannot be helped with hearing aids). To reduce the amount of noise exposure use ear-muffs, earplugs or canal caps. (Kansas Farm Bureau, ASAP Week, 2019)
2. **Rules and Contacts** – Establishing rules about where not to be and when, and the rules for emergency situations is an important step in establishing a plan for children to follow if necessary (Children and Youth Health website, 2017). Making sure all family members, employees, or farm visitors know where the first aid kit is located can save lives. Some important items to have within farm first aid kits include, but are not limited to: band aids, burn cream, gauze, cold packs, eye wash, and rolled bandages (Kansas Farm Bureau, ASAP Week, 2019). Having an emergency contact list is also important, for those around to know who to call – including 911 and local neighbors who might be aware of first aid assistance.
3. **Think Safety Around Livestock** – Cattle, horses, pigs and other livestock are not pets and are responsible for many on farm injuries. Never approach livestock from the rear as to surprise them – stay within their line of vision! (Kansas Farm Bureau, ASAP Week, 2019)
4. **Stay Cool and Hydrated** – Do you know the symptoms of a heat stroke? Confusion, loss of consciousness, seizure, high body temperature, dry skin and profuse sweating are all common symptoms of a heat stroke. Allowing time for water and rest breaks are crucial, it is recommended that a person working in extreme heat drinks 2-4 cups of water per hour. To further avoid risk of heat stroke, try limiting more strenuous work for mornings or evenings when it is cooler. (Kansas Farm Bureau, ASAP Week, 2019)
5. **Move Over for Our Farmers** – Many farmers and ranchers spend quite a bit of time on the roads moving equipment and implements from one farm site to another. In order to let them get their jobs

done safely and effectively, slow down on the roads and keep a safe distance from equipment!
(Kansas Farm Bureau, ASAP Week, 2019)

6. **Turn it Off!** – Always turn off farm machinery when leaving, take the keys out and keep them away from young children. Additional precaution would include applying park brakes and guards. (Child and Youth Health website, 2017) Turning off engines, PTOs, and other hazardous moving parts can keep youth from getting into a quick situation.
7. **Keep it Locked** – Young family members or visitors who may not be familiar with the dangers of many things farm-related could easily find themselves in the middle of something they should not be in. By keeping chemicals, guns/ammunition, water areas (wells, tanks and swimming pools), ladders, portable machinery and lawn mowers locked and out of children's reach at all times, we can minimize risk of injury. (Child and Youth Health website, 2017.)
8. **Dress for Success** – Many farm tasks require special personal protective equipment (PPE) to remain safe. Working with farm chemicals, livestock, equipment, etc. could be reason for wearing PPE such as long sleeve clothing, respirators, ear plugs, eye protection, helmets, steel toed boots, and many other items. Make sure your children are dressed for success!
9. **Breathe Easy** – One-third of all entrapments and suffocations in flowing grain involve children under the age of 14. Never allow children to play or work in grain, work in grain wagons or get into bins or hoppers. Grain quickly becomes quicksand, and can entrap playing children in a matter of seconds. (University of Iowa, 2004)
10. **Be in the Know** – Knowing required skills to accomplish tasks and safety hazards can eliminate injury. Occasional supervision of youth can insure that proper safety practices are being carried out.

Adults living the farming and ranching lifestyle face the same hazards as our children, however they are far more capable of understanding them. While there is no way to hazard-proof our farms, it is important to make it as safe as possible and educate our youth of the potential hazards that lie ahead. Let's work together to bring awareness to safety and health issues that face our young agriculturalists!

Many Northwest Kansas County and District Extension Offices are teaming up to put on the Hazardous Occupations Safety Training for Agriculture class. This event will be held at the Hill City High School, in Hill City, KS on April 27th from 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Youth ages 14-15 years old who will be working on a farm for someone other than their parents are able to attend this training. Contact your local Twin Creeks Extension Office for more details.

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