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Farm Safety for Children

Farming is a unique industry because a farm is not only a workplace, but also a home where families and children live, grow, and play. On the farm, children are exposed to heavy machinery, dangerous chemicals, livestock, and numerous other hazards. As a result, children are at risk of serious farm-related injuries. It is the responsibility of all adults on the farm to protect children from these hazards.

Injuries are predictable and preventable, not accidents. Identifying and isolating potential hazards and ensuring that all members of the farm family are knowledgeable about safety will minimize the risk of injury.

Parents are always concerned about their children's safety. However, farming is a demanding business, often with both parents involved in the workload. Younger children often accompany parents, while older children may participate in the work. Children must always be supervised and when the time is right, they should be properly trained before participating in the farm work.

Children and youth are particularly at risk for injuries and fatalities on the farm. The *Fatal Farm Injuries in Saskatchewan 1990 to 2019 (30 years)* report prepared by the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture (CCHSA), revealed the following:

- 57 children aged 0-14 years died due to farm-related injuries.
- The most common cause of fatal injury for children under the age of 15 is machinery rollover.
- Additional causes of injuries for children under the age of 15 include machine runover of a fallen passenger or a bystander, drowning, and animal related injuries.
- Incidents involving machinery primarily involve tractors, skid steers, off-road

vehicles (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles, dirt bikes), and grain trucks.

- Male children and youth experience fatal farm-related injuries more frequently than female children and youth with a 5:1 ratio.
- 80% of farm work-related fatalities occur during the growing season from April to October, with peaks occurring during seeding and harvesting activities.

Farmers have many roles to play – biologist, horticulturist, veterinarian, accountant, and heavy equipment operator. An equally important role is that of safety manager and inspector. Proper equipment maintenance, use of personal protective equipment, installation of protective covers, and safety training for all people on the farm are vitally important for an injury-free farm workplace.

A Safe Place to Live, Play, and Work

The following safety tips can be adapted to increase safety and minimize risks to children on the farm.

Supervision is Key

- Always know where children are. While this may be difficult when both parents join in the farm work, it is essential for children's safety.
- Young children need special protection. Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers must always be under the supervision of an adult.
- Don't assume that young children understand and remember safety rules. Children do not always understand danger and lack the experience to make safe judgments.
- Older children may overestimate their abilities and underestimate potential risks. Continue to provide supervision and guidance until you are certain they are competent in their assigned task.

Create Safer Environments

- Work together with everyone on the farm to develop a farm safety plan.
- Designate a fenced play area for young children, where they can be closely supervised.
- Secure dangerous areas such as dugouts, lagoons, ponds, and livestock pens. Teach children that these areas are off-limits.
- Fence off or cover water sources such as watering troughs and rain barrels.
- Lock up pesticides, chemicals, and other hazardous materials.
- Keep buildings, ladders, and stairs in good condition.
- Do not allow passengers on farm machinery.
- Place phones with emergency contact information around the farm, and/or make cell phones with emergency contact information available to children.

Provide Education and Lead by Example

- Enroll children in swimming lessons.
- Educate children about hazardous product symbols.
- Revisit safety lessons often, providing more information on why things are dangerous and how to deal with the danger as children grow.
- When children are old enough, enroll them in training before allowing them to operate recreational vehicles such as all terrain vehicles, dirt bikes, and snowmobiles.
- Support school programs and read safety publications to enhance the learning process. Parents must be willing to accept and encourage the safety techniques that children have learned.
- When children are old enough, enroll them in a first aid course.
- Ensure that youth old enough to operate farm equipment know how to turn it off.

Children Working on the Farm

The *Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines* outline when children are old enough to take on a particular task, how best to supervise children and youth at various ages based on the task, the type of safety equipment children and youth must wear, and the safety standards adults must maintain. Children 6 years of age and younger cannot perform any farm-related tasks safely, even with adult supervision. The only tasks deemed safe for children below the age of 10 are hand harvesting vegetables and ground fruit, hand weeding, lifting (less than 25% of body weight), and picking rocks.

For more information, please visit:
<https://cultivatesafety.org/safety-guidelines-search/>



***Lead by example.
Be a good role model for children.
Practice safety every day.***



Resources

Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA):
<https://casa-acsa.ca/en/canadian-agricultural-safety-association/>

Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting (CAIR):
<https://casa-acsa.ca/en/cair/>

Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture (CCHSA):
<https://cchsa-ccssma.usask.ca/>

Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines:
<https://cultivatesafety.org/safety-guidelines-search/>

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our goal is **healthy** children

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute provides services to all those living on Treaty Lands 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, and the homeland of the Métis.

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is dedicated to moving forward on a shared path of reconciliation and partnership. We are all Treaty people.