

## Farm Injuries Happen To Children of All Ages

Many children have their lives enriched by living on, or visiting, farms. Along with the positive benefits, the farm environment has injury risks for children. Being aware of hazards, taking precautions, supervising children and giving them age appropriate chores all reduce the risk of injuries on the farm.

A safe environment, proper supervision, and age appropriate chores all help reduce the risk of injury to children on farms.

### Who is at risk?

- *Children under age 6* are curious and like to explore, but they are not able to judge possible danger. Preschoolers have short attention and memory spans. Rules are quickly forgotten and they need constant adult supervision. Young children are most likely to be injured by falling, drowning, being crushed or being run over.
- *Children between 6 and 11 years of age* are becoming more coordinated but still have slow reaction times and poor hand-eye coordination. They are at risk of injury from falls, being kicked or bitten by animals and being caught in, or run over by, farm machinery.
- *Twelve to 15-year olds* are the most likely to be hurt on farms while operating or riding on machinery. Teenagers and their parents may overestimate what this age group is capable of and may underestimate the risks.

### How to prevent injuries:

#### Machinery and Vehicles

- Provide a safe, protected area for children to play on the farm such as a fenced yard.
- Operators of tractors and other farm machinery should be at least 16 years old and have had proper training.
- Have a “no rider” policy for all farm equipment. Extra riders should not be allowed even for short rides.
- All-terrain vehicles (ATV’s) should be only operated by trained drivers who are at least 14 years of age. They should also wear an approved helmet and proper clothing. Teach children that ATV’s are not toys and must be driven responsibly. ATV’s are NOT designed for carrying passengers, for public road use or for high speeds. Three wheel ATV’s are not safe.
- Make sure that children do not play on or near farm machinery whether it is operating or not. Always use the parking brake and remove the keys from the ignition when the machinery is stopped.
- To prevent clothing and hair from catching in machinery, wear snug fitting clothing and tie back long hair.
- Store farm equipment such as bailers, rakes and small tools in a locked shed when not in use.

#### Drowning and Suffocation

- Ensure root cellars are properly ventilated.
- Keep children out of grain wagons and grain storage areas.
- Put up fencing to restrict access to swamps, dugouts, septic tanks, wells, lakes, grain bins, gravel pits and sand pits.
- Supervise young children at all times.

#### Animal-related Injuries

- Farm animals can behave unpredictably. Teach children to treat livestock with respect and avoid startling them.
- Wear an approved helmet when working with or riding horses.
- Supervise children when they enter animal pens.

#### Burns

- Keep fire extinguishers within reach of all farm machinery in all buildings.
- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in your house, the garage, by the fireplace, and the furnace.
- If electric fences are used, clearly mark them with flags or signs.
- Establish and practice a fire escape route with your family.
- Ensure that all electrical wiring meets safety code.

#### Poisonings

- Store farm chemicals in their original containers, in a locked cabinet and out of reach of children.
- Teach children to recognize and avoid containers that have warning symbols for corrosive, flammable, explosive, and poisonous substances.
- Properly dispose of empty chemical containers.

#### Firearm- related Injuries

- Store unloaded firearms in a locked storage case, separate from the ammunition.
- Teach children the dangers of firearms. Anyone handling them should receive proper training.
- Adults need to remember that every child is different. Children of the same age may vary in ability and may not be ready for the challenges involved in carrying out a particular job.

***Be prepared: First Aid training is a good idea for anyone working on a farm. Handwashing helps to prevent infection.***

“North American Guidelines for Children’s Agricultural Tasks” ([www.nagcat.org](http://www.nagcat.org)) have been developed to assist adults in assigning farm jobs to children 7-16 years old living or working on farms

(Adapted with permission from KIDSAFE Connection, a partnership program between the Calgary Health Region and Capital Health Authority)