

SAFETY ON FARMS

Health and safety problems associated with children on farms

The majority of Australian farms are family owned and operated enterprises. Children on farms can have an enriching life, yet can also be exposed to a variety of workplace hazards not present at most homes. Children are seriously injured on Australian farms and rural properties each year.

- There is about one farm related child death in Australia every 10 days (Pollock et al, 2007).
- There are more than 10 children admitted to hospitals with farm related injuries each week (Kreisfeld, 2007).
- Many more children with farm related injuries also present at Emergency Departments of country hospitals and to General Practitioners (Franklin & Crosby 2005).

Key problem areas identified through the research are:

- Drowning (0-5 years)
- Injury associated with 2 and 4 wheeled motorcycles (5-15 years)
- Injury associated with other farm vehicles
- Horse-related injury (5-15 years)
- Injury associated with farm machinery

Other hazards/causes of injury on farms include silos, chemicals, noise and firearms.

However, injuries from these do not appear prominently in injury statistics.

One prominent study of fatalities on farms found that one third of child fatalities were visitors to the farm. Boys were killed more often than girls (3:1) and three-quarters of children were playing at the time in an area where farm work was being carried out (Franklin et al, 2000).

Younger children are at greater risk, with two thirds of child fatalities on farms being under five years of age. Older children 5-15 years presented to emergency departments with non-fatal injury more often than younger children, perhaps reflecting more leisure activities with horses and motorbikes and their expanding work roles.

Safe Play Areas

A safe play area, such as a securely fenced house yard, helps to prevent unsupervised access of children to farm hazards.

It defines the boundary between the “home” and the “workplace” - where dangers exist that aren’t present in the home and stops a child from easily crossing that boundary.

It can also help stop farm hazards from getting near the children (eg horses, cattle).

The design is critical. A high quality fence for a small area is better than a lower quality fence for a larger area.

Don’t assume your child resistant fence is 100% effective 100% of the time – plan for the unexpected. A fenced house yard/safe play area should be supported with active adult supervision and family rules and it is always useful to have resuscitation skills.



The Farmsafe Australia booklet “Child Safety on Farms - A Practical Guide” has been the primary source of the information in this fact sheet.

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Drownings

Farm dams are the biggest single cause of child injury/death on Australian farms, accounting for 36% of all child farm injury deaths. 75% of the children who drowned lived on the farm (Pollock et al, 2007).

Drowning in dams was five times more common than in swimming pools on farms.



Ways of preventing drownings on farms

- Create a safe play area for children
- Securely fence swimming pools, effluent ponds, channels and dams near the house.
- Fit tanks, wells and troughs near the house with lids/mesh.
- Fill in unused dips and ditches.
- Make sure there is close and active adult supervision at all times.
- Develop family rules for when outside the Safe Play Area such as avoiding dams until children are older and holding hands within easy reach of an adult when close to a dam.
- Dress children in brightly coloured clothing.
- Learn and practice resuscitation and emergency procedures.

Quad Bikes & Motor Bikes

Quad bikes are the second leading cause of death to children under 15 years behind drowning (Pollock et al, 2007).

Over 32% of all injuries to children 0-19 years requiring hospitalization in Australia are associated with motorbikes (Kreisfeld, 2007)). Two wheel motorbikes and older children are more frequently involved in these injuries.

Quad bikes, although involved in fewer injuries, generally result in more serious injuries such as head injuries and crushing of the trunk and chest.



Ways of preventing accidents and injuries:

- Children under 16 years should never ride quad bikes.
- Children should only ride motorcycles that are appropriate for their age and size ie.
- Adjust the throttle of a child's motorcycle to limit maximum speed.
- Construct controlled riding areas / tracks for children to learn to ride motorcycles.
- Training and supervision
- Children should never be carried as passengers on quad bikes.
- Personal protective equipment
- Children should always wear a helmet and boots when riding a motorcycle.

Other Significant Farm Hazards

- Children are killed and injured when riding unrestrained as passengers in **vehicles**, in the back of utes or run over by vehicles.
- **Horse related injuries** - children who ride horses need training in riding, approaching, tending from the ground (grooming etc).Horses should be suited to their age, size and riding ability, Suitable helmets & boots.
- Children are at risk of being run over by **farm machinery** or injured as passengers.
- Other hazards on the farm include **firearms, chemicals, electricity, noise** and **silos**.

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