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- [Site Navigation](#)
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Navigation

[Home](#) [Close Menu](#)

- - [Conversation-Going-travelling](#)
- [Conditions and treatments](#)
 - [Conditions and treatments](#)
 - [Allergies](#)
 - [Allergies](#)
 - [Allergic reaction to packaged food](#)
 - [Anxiety](#)
 - [Arthritis](#)
 - [Asthma](#)
 - [Behavioural conditions](#)
 - [Birth defects](#)
 - [Blood and blood vessels](#)
 - [Bones muscles and joints](#)
 - [Bones muscles and joints](#)
 - [Foot care - podiatrists](#)
 - [Brain and nerves](#)
 - [Cancer](#)
 - [Complementary and alternative care](#)
 - [Dementia](#)
 - [Healthy living](#)
 - [Healthy living](#)
 - [Alcohol](#)
 - [Babies and toddlers \(0-3\)](#)
 - [Children \(4-12\)](#)
 - [Drugs and addictive behaviours](#)

- [Environmental health](#)
- [Family Violence](#)
- [Older people in hospital – Get well soon](#)
- [Health checks](#)
- [Healthy Eating](#)
 - [Nutrition for life](#)
- [Healthy mind](#)
- [Healthy pregnancy](#)
- [Immunisation](#)
- [Services and support](#)
 - [Services and support](#)
 - [Aged care services](#)
 - [Alcohol and drug services](#)
 - [LGBTI support](#)
 - [Carers, caring and respite care services](#)
 - [Child, family and relationship services](#)
 - [Disability services](#)
 - [Emergency, crisis and support services](#)
 - [End of life and palliative care services](#)
 - [Hospitals, surgery and procedures](#)
 - [Mental health services](#)
 - [Planning and coordinating healthcare](#)
 - [Pregnancy and birth services](#)
- [A-Z](#)
 - [A-Z](#)
 - [Conditions and treatments](#)
 - [Healthy living](#)
 - [Services and support](#)
 - [Videos](#)
 - [Service profiles](#)
- [Blog](#)
 - [Blog](#)
 - [Blog authors](#)
 - [Topics](#)
- [Podcast](#)
 - [Podcast](#)
 - [Influenza - Dr Brett Sutton & Prof Kanta Subbarao](#)
 - [Trauma - Anne Leadbeater OAM & Dr Rob Gordon](#)
 - [template](#)
- [Other sites](#)
 -  [Health.vic](#)  [DHHS](#)  [Seniors Online](#)
- [Sitemap](#)
- [My Health Life](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Googleplus](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Rss](#)
- [Conditions and treatments](#)
- [Healthy living](#)
- [Services and support](#)
- [A-Z](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Podcast](#)



[Back to Children \(4-12\)](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Healthy living](#)
- [Children \(4-12\)](#)
- [Farm safety - handling animals](#)

Farm safety - handling animals

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- [Safety](#)
- [Safety - Farm safety](#)

Summary

- Animals are unpredictable, especially during the joining season.
- Make sure yards, sheds and equipment are in good repair.
- Ensure that workers are appropriately trained and familiar with the temperament of the animals on your farm.
- Take care when visiting other people's farms or saleyards.

Farmers and farm workers can easily be injured by livestock. Cattle, pigs, horses, sheep, dogs and other farm animals can be unpredictable and should be treated with caution at all times. Attempting to lift or push animals can cause injury and animals may also transmit certain diseases. Plan ahead for any task, maintain a barrier between the animals and yourself, and get help if you need it.

To prevent farm accidents, assess the breed, temperament, gender mix, size and training of your animals. Remember that both male and female animals may be more aggressive during the mating season.

Make sure your workers are adequately trained and familiar with the temperament of the animals they are working with. Also ensure that yards and fences are well designed and properly maintained.

Always wear suitable protective clothing (pants, boots) and use appropriate animal-handling facilities and aids such as cradles and crushes .

Farm safety risk assessment - animal handling

You can assess potential animal handling risks in many ways:

- Walk through all animal-handling areas and look for hazards, such as broken gate latches, broken posts, or restraining equipment not working.
- Consult with [WorkSafe Victoria's advisory service](#) or visit [WorkSafe's farming information page](#).
- Reflect on injury records to pinpoint recurring dangers, including less obvious ones like lacerations and sprains.
- Talk over safety issues with family members, workers and other animal handlers.
- Make sure at least one person on the farm is trained in first aid.
- Remember that inexperienced workers and bystanders are more likely to be injured.

Yard design, equipment and safety

General suggestions for improving yard safety include:

- Yards, crushes, cradles and sheds should be suitable in size and strength for the animals being handled.
- Avoid blind corners and sharp turns in the design of your yard.
- Keep the walkways and laneways dry and non-slip wherever possible.
- Make sure your gates, footholds and access ways are well positioned.
- Keep all equipment in good repair: gates moving and hung, latches working, hinges greased.

Safe handling of cattle

Suggestions for handling cattle include:

- Make sure the cattle know you are approaching.
- Take care - cows may charge to protect their calves or if they are startled.
- If mustering during mating/joining season, use separate yards for bulls once yarded, if possible.
- Make sure there's enough room for the cattle to move.
- Try to work beyond the kicking range of the animal or close to its body.
- Use head rails, cradles and crushes to restrain animals when necessary.
- Dehorn your cattle.

Safe handling of horses

Suggestions for handling horses include:

- Use appropriate riding equipment that is kept in good repair.
- Wear suitable protective clothing, including a helmet.
- Exercise a horse before you attempt to mount.

- Make sure that inexperienced riders aren't teamed with aggressive or nervous horses.

Safe handling of pigs

Suggestions for handling pigs include:

- Keep boars separate at all times.
- Use a drafting board when moving boars.
- Use nose ropes and crushes to restrain pigs when necessary.
- Lifting a pig should be avoided, but if you must lift a pig, sit it down facing away from you, draw it close to your body and pick it up by the back legs, making sure to lift with your thigh muscles.

Safe handling of sheep

Suggestions for handling sheep include:

- Plan musters in advance.
- Assume that rams will act unpredictably.
- Use suitably trained sheep dogs to control the mob.
- Avoid isolating individual sheep.
- Lifting a sheep should be avoided, but if you must lift a sheep, sit it down facing away from you, draw it close to your body and pick it up by the back legs, making sure to lift with your thigh muscles.
- When shearing, use a harness to support your back.

Animal and human diseases

Many diseases can be transferred from animal to human through contact with skin, wool, hair, blood, saliva, faeces, urine and fetal products. Precautions include:

- Keep your animals appropriately vaccinated.
- Familiarise yourself with the symptoms of animal diseases.
- Treat any sign of illness promptly.
- Practise good personal hygiene - for example, washing hands and getting out of soiled clothing.
- Cover all cuts and open wounds before coming in contact with animals.
- If you come in contact with animal blood, urine or saliva, wash well with soap, water and antiseptic.
- Don't feed offal to dogs as it can transmit [hydatid disease](#).

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance
- [National Centre for Farmer Health](#) Tel. (03) 5551 8533
- [WorkSafe Victoria](#) Tel. (03) 9641 1444 or 1800 136 089
- [WorkSafe Victoria - farming](#)
- [Farmsafe Australia](#) Tel. (02) 6269 5666

References

- *WorkSafe Victoria*, Victorian WorkCover Authority, Australia. [More information here](#).
- *Cattle handling*, Workplace Health and Safety, Queensland Government. [More information here](#).

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Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries.
If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

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- [Children basics](#)
- [Growth and development](#)
- [Behaviour and learning](#)
- [Healthy eating](#)
- [Keeping active](#)
- [Managing weight](#)
- [Care and wellbeing](#)
- [Identity and relationships](#)
- [Health conditions and complaints](#)
- [Safety](#)
- [Grief and trauma](#)

Children basics

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- [Childhood immunisation](#)
[Being immunised from an early age helps protect your child against serious childhood infections...](#)
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[There is a range of subsidised and free health services, including services for mental health and dental health, available for children in Victoria...](#)
- [Children – keeping them active](#)
[A young child is naturally active, so build upon their inclinations to use their body...](#)
- [Eating tips for school children](#)
[Snacks are an important part of a healthy diet for active children, so offer nutritious as well as high energy snacks...](#)
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[Everyone's immunisation needs are different and are influence by your health, lifestyle, age and occupation...](#)
- [Parenting services](#)
[Parenting is one of the most important tasks we undertake but it doesn't always come naturally...](#)

Growth and development

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[Your child is starting to understand social skills like sharing and being kind, but they can only practise these skills for a short time while feeling safe and happy...](#)
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[Always see your doctor if you are concerned about your child's growth or weight...](#)
- [Growth charts for children](#)
[Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...](#)
- [Growth hormone](#)
[Some athletes and bodybuilders wrongly believe that taking synthetic growth hormone will help build up their muscles...](#)
- [Immunisation history statements for children](#)
[By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...](#)
- [Left-handedness](#)
[If your child is naturally left-handed, don't try to force them to use their right hand...](#)
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[Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people...](#)
- [Teeth development in children](#)
[Teething symptoms are common in children and can be managed without medications...](#)

Behaviour and learning

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)
[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [10 tips to prepare your child for high school](#)
[Visit the school before the school year starts ... 10 tips to prepare your child for high school...](#)
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- [A Healthy Start to School](#)
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- [A Healthy Start to School](#)
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- [Anxiety and fear in children](#)
[You can help your child overcome anxiety by taking their fears seriously and encouraging them to talk about their feelings...](#)
- [Bullying](#)
[Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions...](#)
- [Children and literacy](#)
[Your child is literate if they know how to speak, read and write their language with confidence...](#)
- [Children and shyness](#)
[If your child's shyness is especially debilitating, you may like to consider professional help from a counsellor or psychologist...](#)
- [Children and sibling rivalry](#)
[Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...](#)
- [Conduct disorder](#)
[Children with untreated conduct disorder are at increased risk of problems including substance use, personality disorders and mental illnesses...](#)
- [Cyberbullying \(online bullying\)](#)
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[Disciplining your child means teaching them responsible behaviour and self-control...](#)
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- [Oppositional defiant disorder \(ODD\)](#)
[Oppositional defiant disorder is a childhood behavioural problem characterised by constant disobedience and hostility...](#)
- [Peer pressure](#)
[Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life...](#)
- [Receptive language disorder](#)
[Receptive language disorder means the child has difficulties with understanding what is said to them...](#)
- [Sleep - children and nightmares](#)
[Your child may have only a few scary dreams a year, or be troubled by nightmares much more often...](#)
- [Young children and communication](#)
[Children thrive with words of encouragement and praise...](#)

Healthy eating

- [Body image and diets](#)
[Some people diet because they have a poor body image, not because they want to be a healthy weight...](#)

- [Breakfast](#)
[Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2...](#)
- [Childcare and healthy eating](#)
[Childcare centres should provide healthy meals for your children...](#)
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- [Eating tips for preschoolers](#)
[Children are able to decide how much food they need for activity and growth if allowed to eat according to their appetite...](#)
- [Eating tips for school children](#)
[Snacks are an important part of a healthy diet for active children, so offer nutritious as well as high energy snacks...](#)
- [Food for sport - tucker talk tips](#)
[Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes...](#)
- [Healthy eating – school lunches](#)
[Simple ways to make your child's school lunch healthier...](#)
- [Healthy eating tips](#)
[A good balance between exercise and food intake is important to maintain a healthy body weight...](#)
- [Lunch boxes - healthy ideas](#)
[Healthy foods that are great for school lunch boxes...](#)
- [Lunch boxes - healthy shopping ideas \(video\)](#)
[Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham takes us shopping for the right foods to include in your child's lunchbox...](#)
- [Lunch boxes - how to make them healthy \(video\)](#)
[Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham shares three healthy and delicious lunchbox examples for the kids and provides some great food preparation tips to save you time throughout...](#)
- [Lunch boxes - menu planner](#)
[By planning ahead, you can make sure that your child's lunch box has each of the six key elements of a healthy lunchbox...](#)
- [Lunch box tips](#)
[Encourage children to help choose and prepare their own healthy snack or lunch...](#)
- [Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks - children](#)
[Encourage children to drink and enjoy water. Sweet drinks such as juice, cordial and soft drinks may cause health problems for children if consumed in large amounts...](#)
- [Sticking to New Year's resolutions](#)
[New Year's resolutions and how to stick to them...](#)
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[Children can eat a vegetarian diet and stay healthy as long as their extra nutritional needs are met...](#)

Keeping active

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[A young child is naturally active, so build upon their inclinations to use their body...](#)
- [Food for sport - tucker talk tips](#)
[Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes...](#)
- [Gardening for children](#)
[Children can learn new skills, have fun and develop self-confidence when they grow their own plants...](#)
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[Physical activity is an important part of health and wellbeing, and girls should remain active as they grow up...](#)

- [Sport and children](#)

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[New Year's resolutions and how to stick to them...](#)

Managing weight

- [Body mass index \(BMI\)](#)

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- [Eating tips for school children](#)

[Snacks are an important part of a healthy diet for active children, so offer nutritious as well as high energy snacks...](#)

- [Growth charts for children](#)

[Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...](#)

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[Once children are overweight, it takes a lot of effort for them to return to a healthy weight...](#)

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[If your child is overweight, you can help by making healthier lifestyle choices for yourself...](#)

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Care and wellbeing

- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

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- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

[A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...](#)

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- [Cyberbullying \(online bullying\)](#)

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- [Dental checks for young children](#)

[Children should have an oral health check by the time they turn two...](#)

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[Some immunisations are recommended for all Australian teenagers...](#)

- [Pain management \(acute\) - children](#)

[If you think your child is in pain, always see your doctor for diagnosis and treatment...](#)

Identity and relationships

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)

[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

[A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...](#)

- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

[A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...](#)

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- [Body image and young people - staying positive \(video\)](#)

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- [Body image – tips for parents](#)

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- [Children and shyness](#)

[If your child's shyness is especially debilitating, you may like to consider professional help from a counsellor or psychologist...](#)

- [Children and sibling rivalry](#)

[Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...](#)

- [Family violence and children](#)

[Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems...](#)

- [Peer pressure](#)

[Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life...](#)

Health conditions and complaints

- [Asthma explained](#)

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- [Asthma in childhood - triggers \(video\)](#)

[Parents and children talk about some of the factors that can cause a child's asthma to flare up...](#)

- [Asthma in children](#)

[Understanding asthma triggers for your child can help to reduce the risk of an asthma attack...](#)

- [Back pain in children](#)

[Children with back pain may grow into adults with chronic bad backs, so it is important to encourage sensible back care...](#)

- [Bedwetting](#)

[Bedwetting is a problem for many children and punishing them for it will only add to their distress...](#)

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[Mild vomiting is normal in most babies and improves over time...](#)

- [Constipation and children](#)

[A healthy diet, plenty of fluids, exercise and regular toilet habits can help relieve constipation in children...](#)

- [Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers](#)
[Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school...](#)
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[Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...](#)
- [Gastroenteritis in children](#)
[Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea \(runny or watery poo\) and...](#)
- [Head lice \(nits\)](#)
[No product can prevent head lice, but regular checks can help prevent the spread...](#)
- [Immunisation history statements for children](#)
[By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...](#)
- [Obesity in children - management](#)
[If your child is overweight, you can help by making healthier lifestyle choices for yourself...](#)
- [Pinworms](#)
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Safety

- [Animals and child safety](#)
[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)
- [Bicycle safety and children](#)
[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety and become safer road and bicycle users...](#)
- [Burns and scalds - children](#)
[Most hot tap water scald injuries to children happen in the bathroom...](#)
- [Child safety and injury prevention](#)
[By making a few practical changes to your home, you can dramatically reduce the risk of injury to your child...](#)
- [Child safety – at home](#)
[The best way to reduce the risk of injury to children is to remove a potentially dangerous item or add a safety product...](#)
- [Child safety in the car](#)
[Taking care to restrain children correctly while travelling in a car is the best way to prevent injuries...](#)
- [Cyberbullying \(online bullying\)](#)
[Cyberbullying \(or online bullying\) happens when technology is used to bully someone...](#)
- [Farm safety – children](#)
[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)
- [Hot weather and child safety](#)
[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)
- [Internet safety for children](#)
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[Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying...](#)
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[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)
- [Poisoning and child safety](#)

[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)

- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)

[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users...](#)

- [Scooters and child safety](#)

[Scooters can travel at fast speeds and falls and collisions are disturbingly common...](#)

- [Water safety for children](#)

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Grief and trauma

- [Child Protection Service](#)

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- [Cyberbullying \(online bullying\)](#)

[Cyberbullying \(or online bullying\) happens when technology is used to bully someone...](#)

- [Grief and children](#)

[It can be difficult to talk to a child about death, but it is important to be honest with them...](#)

- [Grief – support services](#)

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Any confined space on a farm can be dangerous and the threat may not be apparent until it's too late...

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Handling sheep can cause manual injuries and badly designed shearing sheds can present a range of hazards...

- [Farm safety - manual handling](#)

Farm workers often experience muscle and ligament strain, but good manual handling techniques and safe work habits can prevent most injuries...

- [Farm safety - machinery](#)

Poorly used or faulty machinery is a major cause of death and injury on farms...

[Home](#)

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- [WorkSafe Victoria](#)

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Last updated: November 2016

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