
Farm safety – children

Summary

- Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers.
 - Be sure to child-proof all potentially hazardous areas.
 - Talk to your child frequently about the safety rules of the farm.
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Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers. In fact, the under-15 age group is one of the most vulnerable to work-related farm accidents in Victoria. Children visiting farms account for 25 per cent of all child deaths on farms.

Common hazards include drowning in dams, tanks and creeks, injury from guns or chemicals, accidents with tractors, quad bikes, motorbikes, machinery, animals and falls from heights. The main risk factors are inexperience with equipment or animals, and attempting to perform a task that is beyond their abilities.

Young children in particular need a safe play area of their own where there are no major hazards, so fencing part of the yard close to the house for your child's use is important. Older children can be taught about farm safety, but still need to be supervised at all times. Most importantly, children learn by imitation. If you practise and value farm safety, so will your child.

Farm risk assessment – children

It is recommended that you walk through your farm and assess every area according to the age and ability of your child. Try to see things from your child's point of view. What may seem like a dull workspace to you might seem to your child like an ideal spot for play.

Educate your children about what the hazards are and find ways to child-proof these potentially dangerous areas, using fences and locks and removing keys to machinery and vehicles.

General farm safety suggestions for children

It is impossible to make your farm completely safe, but you can minimise the risks. General safety suggestions include:

- Fence off a safe play area close to the house.
- Fence off all water sources such as dams, ponds, septic tanks, sheep dips, pools and creeks.
- Make sure that hazardous areas are locked and inaccessible.
- Lock up chemicals and guns.
- Ensure electrical equipment and other dangerous materials are out of reach of children.
- Don't let your child ride on farm machinery, such as tractors and quad bikes.
- Ensure your child doesn't have access to any ladders and doesn't climb to heights (such as on hay stacks).
- Teach children about both the positive and dangerous aspects of livestock and farm animals.

Farm rules for older children

Older children can help around the farm, but they still need to be supervised. Suggestions to encourage responsibility and caution in children include:

- Teach safety rules that apply to the different areas of the farm.
 - Make sure your child understands that certain areas are out-of-bounds for them – for example silos, grain loading areas, farm machinery and animal pens.
 - Be consistent, and if your child breaks the rules, firmly re-explain the hazards and consequences.
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Farm safety – lead by example

Children learn by imitation. A child is more likely to be safety conscious if you are. Make sure your child sees you performing tasks safely. Explain the potential for danger and how injury can be avoided. Lead by example:

- Don't let your child, or any other person, ride on farm machinery that isn't designed for passengers.
- Limit the use of motorbikes and quad bikes. Make sure your child has appropriate training if using these, and do not allow untrained visitors to use this equipment.
- Always use safety equipment, such as helmets, goggles and gloves, where necessary.
- Walk around operating machinery instead of stepping over it.
- Fit roll-over protection (ROPS) to your tractor.
- Switch off equipment before altering the settings.
- Refer to warning labels and follow directions.
- Let others know where you are going, what you'll be doing and when you expect to return.
- Talk frequently to your child about the safety rules of the farm.
- Remove the keys from all farm vehicles when not in use.

Draw up a farm emergency plan

An emergency plan for the whole family is vital. Some suggestions include:

- Ensure easy access to a suitable and well-stocked first aid kit.
- Make sure at least one person on the farm is trained in first aid.
- Keep emergency numbers and correct addresses next to the telephone.
- Plan routes to the nearest hospital with an emergency department.
- Regularly talk through your emergency plan with your family and other workers.
- Make sure your children understand what to do in an emergency.

Farm first aid

Make sure your first aid kit is well stocked and easy to access. Emergency medical treatment for young children isn't always the same as for adults. Ideally, all parents should take a first aid course and if possible, one in paediatric (child) first aid.

Never hesitate to call an ambulance if your child is injured. Throughout Australia, the standard emergency number to dial is triple zero (000).

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance
- **Victorian Poisons Information Centre** Tel. **13 11 26** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- **National Centre for Farmer Health** Tel. **(03) 5551 8533**
- **WorkSafe Victoria** Tel. **1800 136 089** (advisory service) or **13 23 60** (for emergencies)
- **Farmsafe Australia** Tel. **(02) 6269 5622**
- Child safety resources:
 - **Kidsafe Victoria** Tel **(03) 9036 2306**
 - **George the Farmer** Tel. **(08) 8737 3317**
 - **Farmsafe – Children on Farms**

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