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## Farm safety - quad bikes

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### Summary

- Quad bikes are a significant cause of injury and death on Victorian farms.
  - Make sure anyone who will be operating a quad bike is properly trained.
  - Reduce your risk of injury and death by familiarising yourself thoroughly with the capabilities of your quad bike.
  - Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times when riding a quad bike.
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Quad bikes (also referred to as ag bikes) are four-wheeled motorbikes that are popular on farms because they are tough and versatile. However, they are also a leading cause of accidental death and injury in rural Australia.

Most injuries or deaths are caused by rider inexperience, lack of helmet or other protective equipment, and hazardous, dangerous riding. People aged between 10 and 24 years are most likely to get hurt or killed riding a quad bike. Across Australia, a number of people, including children, die in quad bike accidents every year.

Although quad bikes are sometimes referred to as all-terrain vehicles, they are not suitable for use in all terrains. Despite having four wheels, the quad bike is not a stable vehicle, due to a high centre of gravity and narrow wheelbase. Most injuries and deaths involve the bike rolling onto the rider and crushing them. This can occur at low speeds.

### Quad bikes can cause injury and death

Injury or death involving quad bikes may result from:

- not using the machine according to manufacturer instructions – for example to carry passengers or loads, or not driving safely allowing for the conditions
- legs (of either rider or passenger) getting caught by the tyres
- the quad bike flipping or rolling while negotiating a steep slope
- the quad bike hitting an obstacle and rolling over
- the rider being hit by a low-hanging obstacle, such as a branch
- carrying too much weight, unevenly distributing loads, or not securing them properly – these can tip the quad bike when in motion
- the rider being unfamiliar with the controls and handling characteristics
- rider inexperience – for example, not knowing that they need to shift body weight to maintain the bike's centre of gravity
- reckless riding, such as riding too fast or trying to perform stunts
- poor maintenance, leading to mechanical failure of vital safety equipment such as brakes.

### Know your quad bike

Inexperienced quad bike riders assume that the four wheels offer better stability than a two-wheeled motorbike. However, at moderate speeds and on slopes, this isn't the case.

Quad bikes are prone to tipping and rolling.

Reduce your risk of injury and death by knowing exactly what your quad bike can and can't do. Suggestions include:

- Read the manual and pay particular attention to the safety instructions.
  - Wear appropriate safety gear including a helmet meeting Australian standards.
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- Read the manufacturers' warning labels and observe them.
- Make sure that anyone who will be operating the quad bike watches the safety video provided with the quad bike and understands the safety recommendations.
- Ask your quad bike supplier for recommendations on training courses. Alternatively, TAFE and agricultural colleges run quad bike training courses. Make sure anyone who will be operating the quad bike is properly trained.
- Practise riding the quad bike until you feel confident – only then put the vehicle to its intended use.

In 2016, in order to encourage farmers to fit safety devices to their quad bikes or to purchase quad bikes with in-built safety components, WorkSafe Victoria introduced the **quad bike safety rebate scheme**. This scheme was extended in 2018 for a further 12 months. Read more about the **quad bike safety rebate scheme**.

### **Safety suggestions for the quad bike**

Farmers are encouraged to fit a suitably designed and tested operator protective device (OPD) where there is risk of quad bike rollover.

Other quad bike safety suggestions include:

- Use the quad bike strictly according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Leave all safety guards in place.
- If your quad bike needs accessories, make sure to use the manufacturer's equipment or their recommendations.
- Fit accessories properly. Don't 'customise' the fit or you may compromise the quad bike's stability.
- Strictly observe the load ratings.
- Keep the quad bike in good mechanical repair.
- Perform a safety check each time before you ride.
- Avoid travelling up or down steep inclines.
- Don't ride in terrain beyond your riding ability.

### **Safety suggestions for riders**

Suggestions include:

- Treat the quad bike the same as other work machinery, not as a recreational vehicle. Don't ride irresponsibly or attempt stunt riding, such as performing 'wheelies'.
- Don't allow untrained people to ride the quad bike.
- Caution children about the dangers and do not let them use the quad bike until they are properly trained and supervised. Make sure they keep well clear of the quad bike at all times when someone else is riding it.
- Never allow passengers on the quad bike. Carrying a person on the back limits the rider's ability to shift weight appropriately.
- Always wear appropriate protective gear – for example, a helmet meeting Australian standards (wear goggles if your helmet doesn't have a visor), boots, gloves, heavy-duty trousers and jacket.
- Ride at an appropriate speed at all times.
- Slow down before turning a corner or braking.

### **Safety suggestions – terrain**

Suggestions include:

- Whenever possible, ride on familiar tracks. Even then, think carefully about the position of any drains or other obstacles, the weather conditions, the nature of the surface and how fast you may be required to ride.
- Ride cautiously when riding the quad bike on bitumen roads, as the smooth road surface may compromise control.
- Remember that liquids within a spray tank can cause sudden shifts to your quad bike's centre of gravity when riding over uneven terrain. Make sure you are able to carry additional weight and that it doesn't exceed the carrying capacity. Take extra care.

- Assess the terrain carefully before choosing to ride on it. Steep slopes, particularly if the dirt is loose or wet, should be avoided as they can cause the quad bike to roll over.
- Watch the ground ahead for potential hazards. Riding into or over rocks, pipes or any other obstacle can cause an accident.
- If you're not confident that you can negotiate a particular stretch of terrain, don't attempt it. Go another way or turn around.

### Where to get help

- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000) for an ambulance – know your correct address
- Quad bike manufacturer
- TAFE or agricultural college (training courses)
- **National Centre for Farmer Health** Tel. **(03) 5551 8533**
- **Farmsafe Australia** Tel. **(02) 6269 5622**
- **WorkSafe Victoria** Tel. **1800 136 089** (advisory service) or **13 23 60** (for emergencies)
- **AgHealth Australia** Tel. **(02) 6882 1486**
- **Australian Workers Union Victorian Branch** Tel. **1300 362 298**
- **Victorian Farmers Federation – Rollover Subsidy** Tel. **1300 882 833**

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National Centre for Farmer Health

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