

SAFE FARM

Promoting Agricultural Health and Safety



Review family farm safety rules

Agriculture is a unique industry because children can be exposed to potentially dangerous situations 24 hours a day.

The farm is both a work and a home environment for many families.

Without a separation between these two environments, children can be exposed to tremendous risks. However, care and guidance from adults can reduce the risks for children living on Iowa farms.

An estimated 33 children in the United States are injured each day in agriculture according to the National Children's Center. The three leading causes of death for youth are incidents involving machinery, motor vehicles, and drownings. Many injuries to children are not directly related to their work or chores, and could have been prevented by planning and an active commitment to safety by adults.

The farm environment

The Norman Rockwell image of a wholesome, safe atmosphere that surrounds agricultural production is far from reality. The hazards are diverse and relate directly to the operation.

Potential hazards are associated with equipment, structures, and livestock. For example, grain is often unloaded by augers driven by tractor power take-off units in a work area near the farm living and playing area. Young children also may interact with livestock, which are unpredictable and can crush children. A carefully considered set of family farm rules is a necessity for young children and visitors to the farm; they also can be helpful for older children who have responsibilities on the farm. Tailor farm safety rules to your operation and family.

One way to keep children safe on the farm is to create a safe environment for them.

Although safety is a daily process, some ways to strengthen your family's safety rules are to:

- 1) designate safe play areas;
- 2) determine other areas that might attract children;
- 3) identify dangers with children; and
- 4) model safe practices.

Designate play areas

Identify locations where children can play with minimal adult supervision. Designated play areas protect children by isolating them from the farm work environment. One play area might be the porch of the farm house and the surrounding yard. A fence will reinforce this division between work and play.

Try to provide appropriate play items, such as swings, a sand box, or playhouse, which make the play area appealing to children. If the farmstead is more enticing than the designated play area, your efforts may not be effective.

Determine other attractions

Discuss with children where they like to play on the farm, and why they like to play there. This might help identify potential problems, and it will give you the opportunity to explain why off-limit areas are dangerous. An explanation is more effective than a "Don't go there" rule. Use examples of what can happen in those areas, or relate true stories about other children who have been injured.

Identify hazards on the farm

Once you've created a safe play area, provide children with reasons to stay there. Walk with children through different areas of the farming operation and point out potential hazards. Explain what makes these areas dangerous. Show

Farm youth safety

How much do you know?

The high number of farm-related injuries to children shows a need for safety. Test your knowledge with this quick quiz.

1. How many children in the United States are injured each day in agriculture?
 - a) about 30 youths
 - b) between 20 and 10 youths
 - c) less than 10 youths
 - d) none of the above
2. A majority of children are injured on the farm when they are involved in chores or are working. True or false?
3. Designated play areas can be relatively safe for minimally supervised play by young children on the farm. True or false?
4. Identify the four major hazard areas on the farm that pose dangers for children.
5. Children identify with safety habits followed by adults in their daily routines. True or false?

See answers on back.

older children newspaper accounts of injuries to show that hazards are real.

Include all aspects of your farming operation. A walking tour should include agricultural machinery and equipment, livestock pens and fields, farm buildings such as grain storage structures, and the farm workshop. Reinforce these points about each area:

Machinery and equipment: This area is most dangerous when tractors and other machines are in operation. Adults may not be able to hear or see others in the area, or they may be distracted by children's play. Children should never enter areas where machines are in operation unless supervised, or until the operator has turned off equipment.

Livestock: Children may be fascinated by livestock and perceive them to be similar to the stuffed animals they play with. However, farm animals can harm people out of territorial protection, maternal instincts, social relationships, or interruption of their habits. Children might not understand or perceive subtle signs an animal will exhibit just before attacking. The difference in body weight between a child and an average farm animal makes crushing injuries common.

Farm buildings: Confined spaces such as silage storage structures can hold a build-up of lethal gases. As with other hazards, it requires a smaller amount of gas or agricultural chemicals to cause serious injury in a child than an adult.

Farm workshop: These areas contain hand tools, chemicals such as oils and cutting fluids, electrical outlets, and sharp

or hot items, such as welded metal. A child can be exposed to many injury-causing items in this environment.

Be a model for safety

Adults set an important example by displaying safety-conscious actions and attitudes. Children will respond to your concerns about safety if they see adults practicing safety rules in their daily life.

Here are a few excellent safety practices that adults can pass on to children, practices that could save lives.

- Follow the "one seat-one rider" rule. Do not allow extra riders on tractors, or passengers on grain wagons and other mobile equipment.
- Read and follow safety instructions in the operator's manual for all equipment.
- Always stop equipment operation when a non-working person enters the area.

Designated play areas and safety rules around the farm will not be effective if they are not enforced or they do not become part of daily life. Keep in mind that children need to be reminded of the rules frequently. They need to hear rules on a regular basis and be taught a few rules at a time. Thoughtful consideration of family rules can make the farm a safer place for children.

Prepared by Charles V. Schwab, extension safety specialist, and Denise Schwab, extension 4-H youth development specialist, with Iowa State University.

Farm youth safety

What can you do?

Safety is important for children who live on the farm. Here are a few ways to make the farm a safe place for children.

- Apply brightly colored hazard decals to all areas that should be off-limits for children. Tell children what the decals mean.
- Discuss with children some of the dangers associated with living and working on a farm.
- Designate a play area for children on the farmstead. If possible, fence the play area.
- Practice your family's Operation EDITH in a mock fire drill as often as needed.
- Set a good example for children by following safe practices in your operation.

Answers to quiz:

1-a; 2-False; 3-True; 4-machinery and equipment, livestock areas, farm buildings, and the farm workshop; 5-True

For more information

Other ISU Extension and Outreach publications may help you develop guidelines for working with animals, or address other related issues. Go to <https://store.extension.iastate.edu>.

[Match age, abilities to farm chores](#)
[Extra riders mean extra dangers](#)
[Keep young children safe on farms](#)

SAFE FARM

Safe Farm is an Iowa State University Extension and Outreach project helping to make Iowa farms a safer place to work and live. For more safety information, check the web at www.abe.iastate.edu.