

- Fit seat belts and wear them at all times for maximum safety.

CHILDREN AND FARM ANIMAL SAFETY

All animals, even pet dogs, can be unpredictable, especially when startled, frightened or protecting their young. Children are at an added risk of injury around farm animals because of their relative size in comparison to animals.

Case study

A 13-year-old girl suffered a concussion, a fractured forearm and extensive bruising after falling from her horse. The girl was not wearing a riding helmet.

Remove the hazard:

- When your children are learning to ride, ensure they have an Australian Standard-approved helmet that fits, use a small, safe enclosed area, ensure the pony is quiet and experienced and maintain adult supervision at all times.
- Keep aggressive animals, such as bulls and stallions, in secure paddocks with locked gates, preferably away from the children's play areas and house.

Guard the hazard:

- Ensure that all animal pens and stockyards are inaccessible to small children.

Practise safety:

- Always supervise small children around any animal.
- Match farm chores involving animals to your children's ages and development.
- Provide and insist on the wearing of appropriate safety gear for horse riding, such as an Australian Standard-approved riding helmet (AS 2062.3) that fits properly, sturdy boots with a smooth sole, heel and elastic sides.
- Teach your children to wash their hands after touching animals to avoid diseases such as hydatid disease.

FARM BIKE SAFETY

Farm bikes or all terrain vehicles (ATVs) are responsible for many injuries, especially to adolescent boys who are at an age when risk-taking behaviour is common. Inexperience and riding a machine unsuited to the size, physique and co-ordination of the rider are the main causes of unintentional injury.

Case study

A 15-year-old boy who was not wearing a helmet died from head injuries sustained after falling from an ATV while riding around a dam wall and hitting his head on a rock.

Remove the hazard:

- Match the bike to your child's abilities to handle confidently.
- It is recommended that children only ride a bike if they can place both their feet firmly on the ground on either side while seated astride the bike.

Practise safety:

- Teach your children how to ride safely. This should include wearing an Australian Standard-approved helmet (AS 1698) that fits properly, eye protection, gloves, long trousers and sleeves and sturdy boots.
- Explain to your children the dangers associated with speeding, rough ground and gravel.
- Develop a set of rules specific to your farm regarding the riding of bikes. This should include never permitting another child to be a passenger and never riding near an unsupervised smaller child.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS FARM INJURY

Develop and practise a farm emergency plan so that all adults and children know what to do in the event of a serious farm injury.

Consider the following points:

- Ensure that at least one adult on the farm is fully trained and competent in first aid and resuscitation techniques. (Contact St John Ambulance or Red Cross in your State for information about courses near you.)
- Keep several well-equipped first aid kits conveniently located on the farm. (eg, in the house, as well as in other areas, such as workshops, dairies or shearing sheds.)
- Keep a fire extinguisher in an accessible place in the house, as well as in the workshop and on the tractor.
- Devise an evacuation and emergency plan in point form and practise the plan regularly with family and staff members in the event of a house fire or emergency.
- Keep the emergency plan and a list of emergency telephone numbers beside all telephones located on the farm and on the back of any mobile phones you may carry while working on your farm.
- Other important information to include would be your nearest neighbour with a car, your farm map reference and the Poisons Information (24 hours) telephone number: 13 11 26.
- Teach your children how to use the evacuation plan, emergency plan and what information is needed if they have to telephone for help in an emergency.



A parents' guide to kidsafe farms



Why make your farm Kidsafe?

A farm provides a very healthy and happy environment in which to raise your children. Unfortunately, a farm may also be a very dangerous place.

CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE

Children in this age group are most often injured on farms as bystanders or when at play.

Drowning is one of the highest causes of death for children aged one to four years both in the city and country.

Other potential risks for small children on farms include:

- Vehicle run-overs (including tractors, trailers and other vehicles)
- Injuries from animals
- Poisoning

CHILDREN FIVE TO NINE YEARS OF AGE

In this age group, children are beginning to recognise danger and have developed more co-ordination. They like to explore and find their own solutions to problems. However, their awareness of speed and their range of vision are not yet fully developed.

(Before the age of eight or nine years, children have tunnel vision. This means that they can only see what is in front, and not to the side of them, without turning their heads.)

Therefore, children in this age group are at increased risk of injury from animals and moving vehicles and as passengers in a moving farm vehicle.

CHILDREN TEN TO FOURTEEN YEARS OF AGE

Generally the major risks on farms for children aged between 10 and 14 years are:

- Falls from machinery
- Tractor roll-overs and run-overs
- Horse-related injuries
- Suffocation
- Firearms incidents

RULES FOR A KIDSAFE FARM

Children are extremely curious but lack adult judgment. They are small enough to get past protective barriers and shields that would stop most adults, so there is a strong need to identify hazards from a child's perspective.

There are three basic rules to making any farm kidsafe:

- 1 Identify the hazard
- 2 Remove the hazard or (if it can't be removed) guard the hazard
- 3 Practise safety

Children aged 5–14 years are at high risk because this is the age when they begin to participate in farm activities that require the use of powered machinery and equipment.

The older child should be taught to:

- Identify hazards
- Perform their own assessment of risk
- Know what to do if they find something unsafe

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

For toddlers, it is particularly important to provide a safe, secure and supervised play area away from farm activities.

This involves fencing off the home yard or providing a fenced-in play area that children can't climb over or through.

Kidsafe recommends child-resistant fencing of 1.2 metres high with a self-latching/self-closing gate – pool fencing is ideal. (Swimming Pools Act & Regulations 1992 & Regulations 1998 & AS 1962- 1986 “Fences and Gates for Private Swimming Pools”.) Outdoor play areas should also provide adequate shade to protect your children from the damaging rays of the sun, especially between 11am and 3pm.

To create a safe environment for older children, parents need to set and reinforce safety rules. This is especially important for times when the children are unsupervised. Safety rules may include play areas that are out of bounds, situations where the child is required to seek adult approval and general safe practices around the farm.

Example of rules

Out-of-bounds play areas are:

- On or near the tractor
- In the dairy or shearing shed

Seeking adult approval:

- Always ask an adult if it is safe to swim in the dam
- Always tell an adult where you are going on the farm.

Safe practices:

- Always wear an Australian Standard-approved helmet when riding farm bikes or horses.
- Always put tools or equipment away after use.

TRACTOR SAFETY

A tractor is the most dangerous piece of machinery on the farm. Tragically, tractors are still the main cause of death on farms across Australia. One in four deaths caused by tractors is that of a child. Children under five years of age are most likely to be injured while at play on, or near, tractors. Older children are more likely to be injured as passengers or while carrying out farm tasks that are unsupervised.

Case studies

- i. A four-year-old boy died when a reversing tractor crushed him. He had been playing behind the tractor.
- ii. A two-year-old boy died after a tractor wheel crushed him when he fell out of the cabin.

Guard the hazard:

- Always remove the starter key from the tractor after use.
- Whenever possible, lock the cabin to prevent access by children.
- Always lower the front-end loader or the three-point linkage equipment to the ground when not in use.
- Always park a tractor on level ground. If you are unable to, another option is to place a brick in front of both front wheels and at the back of the rear wheels so that the tractor can't roll forward or backwards.

Children learn by watching and copying adult actions and do not always identify a safe practice from an unsafe practice.

Practise safety:

- Be role models to your children and explain the dangers of playing on and around tractors.
- Never allow your children to be passengers on a tractor or any equipment being towed by a tractor. (Consult your State's occupational health and safety legislation regarding guidelines for safe tractor usage.)
- Always ensure that children are a safe distance away but still within your vision, before starting a tractor.
- Always travel in low gear near the house or around other farm buildings (children can duck out from hidden spaces).
- Never leave a tractor unattended if the motor is running. A safe practice would be to turn the motor off, put any front or back-end loaders to the ground and secure the brake. (The extra time taken to do this might save a life.)
- To protect yourself and your family, fit an Australian Standards-approved rollover protective structure (AS 1636) to your tractor.

Continued over