

KEEPING KIDS SAFE ON FARMS

A Guide For Farming Families



Keeping Kids Safe on Farms: A Guide for Farming Families was developed in 2012 by the Safe Play Areas for Ross County Kids (SPARK) Project at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. The SPARK Project, funded by the Central Benefits Health Care Foundation, aims to promote safe play for kids in rural areas and to reduce play-related injuries.

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GROWING UP ON A FARM

In the United States today, more than 1 million children live on farms, and many more visit farms every year. Farms can be exciting places for kids to grow up. They offer the chance to learn about growing food, caring for animals, gaining responsibilities, and witnessing the circle of life. Unfortunately, large animals, machinery, and equipment make farms especially dangerous places for young kids to play.

Every year, more than 100,000 children are injured on U.S. farms. Of these, more than 22,000 children are injured badly enough to be treated at emergency departments.

FARM INJURY FACTS

- Farm injuries are most common among preschoolers and younger teens. Most farm-related deaths occur to children younger than 4 years old.
- Young children are more likely to be injured than older children because they lack coordination and do not understand the risks of their behaviors.
- Common causes of injury to children younger than 6 years of age include falls, drowning, large animals, machinery, and tractors.

The good news for parents is that most of the injuries to children can be prevented! While it is impossible to prevent every injury from occurring, this booklet will help parents identify serious hazards and make their farms as safe as possible.

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Parents often struggle to find the balance between allowing kids to enjoy the benefits of farm life, while at the same time protecting them from the hazards. Knowing what to expect as your child grows and develops will help you recognize dangers for your child's age and ability, eliminate hazards, and manage the risks.

Infants & toddlers: Babies will learn to roll over, sit, crawl and even walk in their first year. The only way to protect our youngest kids from danger is with constant adult supervision and physical controls like restraints (infant carriers or car seats) and barriers.

Preschoolers: 4 and 5 year olds are very curious and mobile. Supervision and barriers are still a requirement with this age group. "Touch" supervision is key when dangers are near. This means the adult is close enough to grab the child and is not distracted by reading or talking on the phone. As kids get closer to school age, parent can begin to teach simple rules.

School age: Kids ages 6-11 years have short attention spans and are unable to evaluate danger and make safe decisions. Parents should use rules to guide the child's behavior. At this age, kids can be taught simple tasks like feeding pets, helping in the garden, and caring for some of the livestock. Parents will still need to remove hazards and teach kids by repeated demonstration. Though constant supervision might not be necessary, kids still need contact with an adult every 10-15 minutes.

Middle school: By the time kids reach about 12 years of age, they will have limited ability to use good judgment. It is critical that adults limit their tasks and monitor them for risk taking behaviors. Kids will need to use proper safety equipment with all chores. Youth leaders like 4-H advisors can be helpful in reinforcing safety behaviors at this age.



It is no secret that play is a great way for kids to exercise and develop new skills. But finding a safe place to do this on the farm might be tricky, especially when parents are busy with farm work.

Though it might seem easy to watch young children while you are working, it only takes seconds for kids to dart off or try to imitate parents by touching machinery or animals. Take a moment to consider all of the ways adults can be injured while working on the farm. Kids will be exposed to the same risks, but they do not have the skills to make safe decisions.

The best solution is to set up a safe play area away from the working area. Unfortunately, only 3 in 10 farms with young children have such a play area.

CREATING A SAFE PLAY AREA

The first step is to find the safest spot for your play area. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ Is it separated from the working area by a fence, gate, or closely planted shrubs?
- ✓ Will it be within sight and sound of an adult who can supervise?
- ✓ Is it free of tripping hazards, such as rocks, tree stumps, roots, and holes?
- ✓ Is it set away from moving traffic?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, there is the potential for injury. Think about ways you can remove some of these risks before setting up the play area.



Once you find the safest spot for your play area, begin to set up barriers and clear the area of any potential hazards.

Keep in mind that some of the leading causes of injury to children on farms include:

- Drowning
- Falls
- Fires
- Poisonings

The following pages will provide helpful tips on how to reduce some of these risks.

WATER SAFETY

Parents often recognize that large bodies of water can be dangerous for kids. But did you know that children can actually drown in just inches of water? Drowning can occur very quickly, silently, and any place water can collect.

Now think about your play area again. Are there things that could be drowning hazards?

To decrease the risk of drowning, follow these safety steps:

- **Pools:** More than half of pool drownings could be prevented if parents put up a 4- sided fence around the pool. The fence should be at least 4 feet high and have a gate that closes and latches on its own. Wading pools should be drained right after being used.
- **Large bodies of water:** If your farm has ponds, lakes, or streams, the same fencing rules apply. It is also important to install rescue posts, including nylon rope, a life buoy and a rescue pole, near any large body of water.
- **Swimming:** Children should only swim if an adult is watching them carefully. This means that the adult is close enough to touch them and is not distracted by reading or talking on the phone. Keep in mind that just because a child knows how to swim, it does not mean he is safe from drowning.
- **Rain:** Be aware of areas that may collect water during storms such as ditches, troughs, buckets and pails.
- **Manure pits:** Though it is unpleasant to think about, manure pits can also be drowning hazards for young kids. Remember this and make sure children cannot access pits.
- **CPR:** It is important for parents to learn CPR. When seconds count, knowing CPR can save a life.





FALL PREVENTION

Falls are the most common cause of injury to children. Though not every fall can be prevented, parents should know that they can take steps to make injuries from falls less severe. By lowering heights and softening surfaces, parents can prevent the worst types of injuries.

- **Heights:** If kids are playing in a tree house or loft, make sure it is no higher than 10 feet in the air and has barriers.
- **Safety Surfacing:** Cover the ground under play equipment with at least 12 inches of mulch or sand. Grass and dirt are not protective surfaces!
- **Barns:** Do not allow children to play in a barn unsupervised. Barns often have high lofts and hard ground, making falls very dangerous.
- **Ladders:** Secure and lock fixed ladders on barns and silos high enough to prevent children from playing on them.

FIRE PREVENTION

Farms can be risky places for fires, especially considering the electrical systems, flammable materials, and large amounts of fuel. Add in the fact that farms are often located far from fire departments, and farm fires can take a devastating toll on families, animals, crops, and structures.

- It is important to have working smoke alarms on the farm, including in the barn. Remember to change the batteries at least once a year.
- Do not allow kids to play near grills, bonfires, or fire pits. These should be at least 10 feet away from the house, barn, or bushes.
- Never allow kids to play with matches. Kids are naturally curious about fire, but they need to know it's not a toy.

POISON PREVENTION

Young children like to explore the world by placing things in their mouths. This can be especially dangerous when living on a farm. Common poisons on the farm include: pesticides and chemicals, plants, cleaning products, fuel, and animal medications

To keep your kids safe:

- Lock poisons up and out of reach of kids.
- Keep all chemicals and cleaners in their original packaging. Never place poisonous substances in food or drink containers.
- Safely dispose of unused chemicals and medications.
- Be aware that manure pits and silos can give off poisonous gases. They are usually colorless and odorless, but deadly. Never allow kids to enter these areas.

Plants and berries: A fun part of living on a farm is growing your own food. However, kids cannot eat every plant or berry they see.

Parents should check the play area for poisonous plants. If you are not sure, you can call the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) for a list of poisonous plants common to your area.

Help children identify what they can and cannot eat. Set a rule that kids must ask an adult first if they can eat something growing on the farm. If they are told it is ok, they must wash the fruit or veggie before eating it.



TAKE AWAY PLAY AREA SAFETY TIPS



The play area should be separated from the work area by secure barriers, such as fences, gates or closely planted shrubs.



Drowning hazards on farms include pools, ponds, manure pits, troughs, and ditches. The best way to prevent drowning is to install a 4-sided fence around all bodies of water. It should be at least 4 feet high with a gate that closes and latches on its own.



Falls are the most common cause of injury to kids. To keep falls from causing serious injuries, never allow kids to play at heights more than 10 feet in the air. Cover the ground under tree houses, lofts or play equipment with 12" of mulch or sand.



Electrical systems, flammable materials, and fuels make farms dangerous places for fires. Make sure you have working smoke alarms in your house and in the barn. Remember to change the batteries at least once a year.



Common poisons on farms include pesticides, chemicals, plants, cleaning products, fuel, and animal medications. Always keep poisons locked up and out of reach of children.





Now that we have discussed setting up a safe play area, it's time to consider the things kids play on or with outside. Some of the most popular ways to play outdoors include using playground equipment and toys on wheels and engaging in winter sports activities.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Installing swing sets and slides are great ways to bring the playground to your home. However, they are only fun if they are safe!

- **Falls:** We discussed earlier that falls from heights and onto hard surfaces are particularly dangerous. To prevent injuries from play equipment, add safety surfacing under slides, swing sets, and tire swings.
- **Safety surfacing:** Cover the area under and around the play equipment with at least 12 inches of surfacing (mulch or sand). Some parents think grass will be soft enough to cushion a fall, but this is not the case.
- **Strangulations:** Never allow children to attach jump ropes, clotheslines or pet leashes to play equipment. If these items wrap around a child's neck, strangulation can occur. Additionally, drawstrings on children's clothes can be a hazard, if they get caught on equipment. Avoid dressing kids with strings or jewelry around the neck.
- **Trampolines:** Backyard trampolines are not safe for kids, even if they have the net siding included.
- **Age limits:** Keep in mind that not all play equipment is right for all kids. Kids younger than 6 years do not have the upper arm strength, hand grip size or coordination for some items, such as: seesaws, sliding poles, spiral slides, and overhead rings.

TOYS ON WHEELS

Young riders have a hard time judging speed and distance, and often think they are faster than moving vehicles. Know your child's abilities and set limits about where and when he can play.

- **Bikes:** Kids are usually ready for a 2-wheeled bike around age 5, but some kids do not have the coordination skills until later. Pick out a bike that is the right size for your child.
- **Scooters:** Kids younger than 8 should never use a scooter without adult supervision.
- **Skateboards:** Kids younger than 5 should not use skateboards, and kids ages 5-10 should only use when supervised. Never allow kids to hold on to a moving vehicle while on a skateboard.
- **Protective equipment:** Helmets protect the head and reduce the risk of brain injury by up to 88 percent! Wrist guards, elbow pads, and knee pads are also important when skating, skateboarding, and riding a scooter.

Did you know that a helmet should be worn during all of the below?

- Biking
- Skateboarding
- Riding a Scooter
- Horseback riding
- Playing sports
- Riding on an ATV
- Skating (Roller, Inline, & Ice)
- Sledding

Helmets should NOT be worn on playground equipment. You might think a helmet will protect a child's head if he falls, but helmets can cause head entrapment and strangulation on play equipment.

Visit www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/349.pdf for more information about types of helmets.



WINTER ACTIVITIES

Winter can be great fun outside if safety steps are taken.

- **Sledding:** Did you know sleds can reach speeds of 25 MPH? Avoid sledding in areas with trees, fences, ponds or traffic. Never pull a sled by a car, ATV, snowmobile, or other vehicle. Children younger than 5 should only sled with an adult.
- **Snowmobiles:** Children younger than 6 should never ride on snowmobiles. Children should not operate one until they are at least 16 years old and have been trained.
- **Ice skating:** Frozen bodies of water can have thin patches that can break. Never skate on river ice or ice that has thawed and refrozen.
- **Dress warmly:** Wear a winter coat, hat and gloves, and slip-resistant snow boots.

TAKE AWAY PLAY AREA SAFETY TIPS



Cover the ground under slides, swing sets, and tire swings with at least 12 inches of safety surfacing (mulch or sand).



Know your child's abilities, and set limits for where and when your child can play.



Always have kids wear helmets with anything on wheels or when riding on horses or sleds.



Kids should only sled in areas that are clear of fences, trees, ponds, and traffic.



Frozen bodies of water can have thin patches and be very dangerous. Never skate on river ice or ice that has been thawed and refrozen.



FARM EQUIPMENT

Taking a ride on tractors, combines or ATVs seems exciting to many young kids, but it is just not safe. Sometimes grandparents will say, "Well, my kids always rode with me and nothing bad ever happened to them." But year after year, we see life changing injuries to kids from farm vehicles, and no parent ever thinks it will be their child.

To prevent injuries to kids from farm vehicles and machinery:

- Check the work area for children before starting any equipment. Do not operate equipment until kids are securely away.
- Never allow kids to climb and play on or near farm equipment, even if it's not in use. Teach kids early on that vehicles and machinery are NOT play toys.
- Always lock vehicles and machinery when you're finished using them. Remove the keys and keep them out of reach of kids. Never let kids play in areas where farm equipment or machinery are being used or stored.
- Equipment that may fall should always be left in the down position.
- Kids should never be passengers or extra riders on ride-on mowers, tractors, ATVs, work wagons, truck beds, or any other type of farm equipment.
- Kids younger than 16 should NEVER operate ATVs, 4-wheelers, dirt bikes, mopeds, riding lawn mowers or tractors.

- You might be thinking, well what about the "kid-sized" ATVs? Even though these are made and sold for kids, children younger than 16 do not have the coordination to operate them safely.
- Some parents think if their child can reach the pedals and the wheel, they are ready to operate equipment. This is not the case. Some kids will be physically capable before having the mental capacity to handle it. If kids cannot understand risks and consequences, they can't make safe decisions or react when something unexpected happens.
- Once a child is 16 years old, he or she might be ready to start training to operate vehicles. Only after the teen is thoroughly trained and demonstrates good judgment should he or she be permitted to drive farm vehicles or operate equipment.
- Older teens should always wear helmets and protective gear when using ATVs, 4-wheelers, mopeds, and dirt bikes.





STORED GRAIN

Grain can create a deadly flow, regardless of where it is stored (grain bins, carts, semi-trucks, feed bins or even in a pile in a barn). Grain bridged over an opening or grain stuck to the side walls can engulf a person just like flowing grain. A person can become trapped under shifting grain in seconds and suffocate.

Protect your kids by locking the doors, gates, and discharge chutes. Keep kids out of grain wagons, carts, and semi beds. Even letting children play in small amounts can lead to underestimating the dangers of flowing grain.

Ladders and grain elevator legs need to be high enough that children cannot climb them. If this is not the case, make sure you have secure barriers that will prevent your kids from accessing the ladders.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Electrical hazards can be found in almost any area of the farm. Humidity, dust, vibrations, rodents, and livestock can cause damage to electrical systems, leading to the risk of shock or electrocution.

Lock up electrical boxes and make sure children cannot access electric lines, the electric fence controls, or other parts of the electrical system. Keep all sources of water away from electric boxes, the electric fence controller, and outlets.

Because you may not notice small changes in your daily work, it is important to schedule regular inspections of the electrical motors and systems on the farm. This way you can make updates and changes before an injury occurs.

TAKE AWAY FARM EQUIPMENT TIPS



Kids should never be passengers on ride-on mowers, tractors, ATVs, work wagons, truck beds, or any type of farm equipment.



Kids should not operate or ride on an ATV, 4-wheeler, dirt bike, or moped until they are at least 16 years old and properly trained. Even the "kid ATVs" are not safe.



Keep kids away from farm equipment when in use. Check to make sure they are securely away from moving vehicles and equipment.



Stored grain can create a deadly flow no matter where it is. Lock all grain storages and keep ladders out of reach of kids.



Make sure kids do not have access to electric lines, electric fence controls, or outlets. Keep all sources of water away from electrical systems.



ANIMAL SAFETY

One of the leading causes of injury to kids on farms is animals. Before allowing your child to interact with animals, make sure he is able to be calm, quiet, and steady in his motions. If your child cannot listen to you and follow directions, he is too young to be interacting with animals.

HOW TO APPROACH ANIMALS

Constant adult supervision is a must for young kids around large animals. Before allowing kids to approach an animal, it is important for parents to teach them a few safety rules and demonstrate the right way.

- Approach with a slow, steady pace.
- Speak quietly with your hand outstretched.
- Stop close enough that the animal may sniff or reach toward you. As long as the animal remains calm, continue to approach at about the shoulder area.
- Pet the animal by keeping the fingers together and the hand flat. This will reduce the risk of being bitten.
- Consider any other risks that might exist (such as loud noises or uneven surfaces). Do not permit kids to be around mothers who are still feeding their babies, adult males, or ill animals. These animals can be protective, aggressive, and less predictable, making them more dangerous to kids.
- Do not let kids have contact with wild animals, especially if they show signs of illness or abnormal behavior.





SAFE HANDLING OF ANIMALS

As kids get older and more mature, they will want to take on more responsibility with the animals. Before allowing kids to complete tasks, show them how to safely handle the animal and how to recognize warning signs. Teach kids about the behaviors unique to each animal. Do not let kids handle animals until you feel confident in their abilities.

Small Animals: Many small animals use their claws or mouths for self-defense. To keep from scaring the animal, approach slowly and quietly. Wear long sleeves to keep small animal toenails from scratching. Roosters may use their spurs on the legs in self-defense, so help kids avoid this risk.

Large Animals: Defense mechanisms of large animals include:

- Biting - Horses and pigs will bite, but cows do not have upper teeth so biting is not one of their traits. Goats will nip, though generally there will not be a break in the skin.
- Kicking - Horses and cows will kick.
- Running - Horses, cows, pigs, and sheep will run over you if they are frightened and have no other route away.

Teach children to recognize a scared or unhappy animal by watching its behavior. Slowly back away or get behind a barrier if you see a growling dog, a cow pawing the dirt, or a horse whinnying and tossing its head.

HANDWASHING

It is important to teach kids that germs from animals can make them sick if they don't wash their hands with warm water and soap after touching them. Set and enforce a rule that children must wash hands after feeding, touching, or cleaning animals.

TAKE AWAY ANIMAL SAFETY TIPS



Know your children's abilities before introducing them to animals. They are only ready if they can listen carefully and follow directions.



Teach children how to approach an animal slowly, calmly and quietly.



Show kids how to safely handle small and large animals before allowing them to complete advanced tasks. Teach kids how to recognize an angry animal and what to do if an animal feels threatened.



Do not permit kids to be around mothers who are still feeding their babies, adult males, or ill animals. These animals can be protective, aggressive, and less predictable, making them more dangerous to kids.



It is important to wash hands with warm water and soap after touching, feeding, or cleaning animals.



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY



Safety Plan

Teach your children how to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. Make sure they know their full name, address and how to give a short description of the emergency. If you call 9-1-1 on a cell phone, it may not go to the nearest emergency center. Be sure to provide the state and county, the closest city, and the closest road or highway.

Keep a list of emergency numbers by the phone. Teach your kids where to find the First Aid Kit in an emergency.



Fire

Get outside as fast as possible. Call 9-1-1 after you are safely outside. Once you are out, stay out. Do not go back inside.



Drowning

Yell for help. Perform CPR and have someone else call 9-1-1. When seconds count, knowing CPR can save a life. To learn CPR, call the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association for class listings.



Poisonings

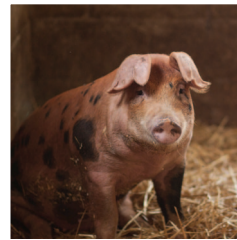
Call 1-800-222-1222. Do not try to make your child vomit or use syrup of ipecac.



Electric Shock

Turn off the power immediately. Remove the object from the child with a stick, rolled up magazine, or another dry object (NOT your bare hands). Check the child's breathing and look for burns. If your child's breathing or heartbeat seems irregular, immediately start CPR.

Have someone else call 9-1-1. Even without visible signs of trauma, your child will need to be checked for internal organ damage.



Animal Injuries

Animal bites: Wash the area with soap and water. Check for bleeding. Apply pressure to the area for 5 minutes or until the bleeding stops. If the wound is large or does not stop bleeding, call a doctor. Always contact a doctor if an animal bite breaks the skin to check for infection and diseases.

Animal kicks: Do not approach the angry animal. Call 9-1-1 immediately. Do not move the person who has been hurt unless he or she is in danger.



Machine Injuries

If someone is injured, turn off the power and call for help. Call 9-1-1 immediately. Do not move the person. Try to keep them calm until help arrives.



EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Fill out the magnet with important emergency information. In times of panic, it might be hard to remember some details or properly explain directions.

If you have the information filled out and placed on your fridge, you (or whoever happens to be handling the emergency) will know exactly where to look and who to call.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the SPARK Project or Farm Safety, please visit our website at injurycenter.org/spark.aspx

If you have additional questions, contact:

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www.childinjurypreventionalliance.com