

# STAYING SAFE ON THE FARM A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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# FARMING IS NOT CHILD'S PLAY

**Farms may conjure an image of a picture-perfect landscape, with children running and playing in green fields. But farms come with their own dangers. And there have been plenty of debates and yes, arguments, over the years on what should be done to ensure the safety of children who live or work on our farms.**

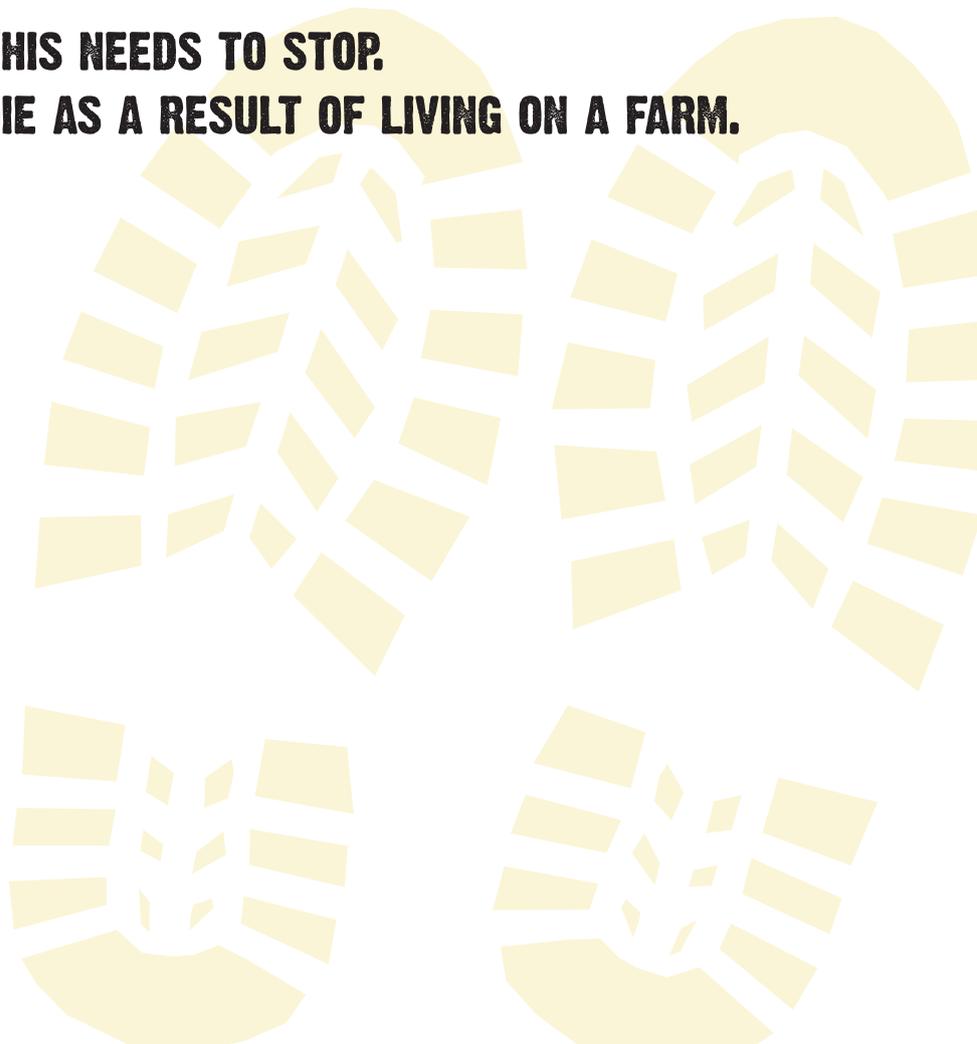
If the family business were medicine or construction, there would be little chance of a child wielding a scalpel or tiling a roof. But on a family farm, children as young as 10 are driving quads and tractors and doing work that may be part and parcel of a rural life but that also contributes to killing and injuring children and teenagers every year.

They can be dangerous places for everyone, not just children, but children are still being put at risk when playing, visiting or helping out around the farm. It's not hard to imagine a child being killed by falling off a tractor, being crushed or attacked by an animal, or suffocating in a grain silo but, as we have seen, being hit by, or run over by, farm machinery or moving vehicles remains the biggest single cause of children losing their lives on our farms.

Every one of these deaths is predictable and preventable. Unfortunately this is not the view of everyone in the industry. Some accept a certain number of child fatalities as inevitable or believe the benefits of farm life for children - spending quality time with parents and family, early exposure to serious work and responsibility - outweigh the risks.

Children can be eager to help out with farm work alongside other family members however, it is important to understand that each farm task has a certain level of risk associated with it.

**THIS NEEDS TO STOP.  
NO CHILD SHOULD DIE AS A RESULT OF LIVING ON A FARM.**



# FARMS CAN BE DANGEROUS

**We know that farms can be wonderful places for children to grow up, where independence and responsibility are fostered and family relationships are strengthened.**

They are also a fantastic source of learning where organised visits can inform and inspire children from all backgrounds to learn about where their food comes from and how the industry is vital to everyday life.

But we also know that farms and farmyards are not playgrounds.

Being hit by, or run over by, farm machinery or visiting vehicles is the biggest single cause of children being killed on farms.

Falling from tractors and quad bikes/ATVs; drowning; being crushed or attacked by animals or being hit by falling objects are the other main causes.

- Children should not be allowed in the farm work place (and for young children they should enjoy outdoor space in a secure fenced area).
- Any access to the work area by children under 16, for example for education, or knowledge experience, should be planned and fully supervised by an adult not engaged in any work activity.
- Children under the age of 13 years are not allowed to drive or ride on any agricultural machine.

**ON A BUSY FARM, AND IF PROPER SUPERVISION IS NOT POSSIBLE, THE BEST WAY TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE ON A FARM IS TO KEEP THEM AWAY.**



# MOVING VEHICLES

**The world of agriculture has changed since we were children and we all need to keep up. Keeping our children safe and sound has to be a priority for all of us and it is all the more important when it comes to farm transport.**

Over the years, farm machines have got bigger and more powerful.

The natural curiosity of children and their fascination for tractors, telehandlers and other agricultural vehicles tends to draw them towards busy work areas. But children can be hard to see and they are in great danger of being run over by moving machines – especially at busy times, such as during silage making, grain harvesting and slurry spreading.

They also need to be kept away from other vehicles which may visit the farm such as milk tankers or lorries delivering feed.

## CHILDREN AND TRACTORS

### **TRACTORS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO CARRY CHILDREN**

The law states that no child under 13 years old may drive or ride on tractors or any other self-propelled machine used in agriculture.

Don't be fooled into thinking that children are safe in the cab of a tractor either – they are not. It is actually illegal to carry children under 13 in the cab of an agricultural vehicle and hugely unsafe. Falling from tractors and then being run over is a common cause of fatal accidents.

Training – Children aged 13 and over can, with appropriate permission and supervision, drive an appropriate tractor on agricultural land provided they hold a nationally recognised certificate of competence in the safe driving and operation of tractors. If you have teenagers, and they really want to help, this is well worth researching.

## CHILDREN AND QUAD BIKES

### **QUADS ARE NOT TOYS**

Many children have been involved in serious and fatal accidents caused by quad bikes. Only properly trained people, within the age range recommended, (minimum age 16 years), should be allowed to operate it. They must wear the correct helmet and be adequately supervised.

Passengers must never be carried on quad bikes used as light agricultural vehicles.

# FALLING OBJECTS

**The best way of protecting children from falls and falling objects is to keep them away from the farm unless very closely supervised by someone not involved in farm work on the day.**

Heavy objects such as spare or old tractor wheels, old gates and old machinery can fall on children so care is needed to make them secure.

Check that ladders have been stored safely where children cannot climb them.

Stacks of hay or straw are not great places for hide and seek – they are NOT play areas and can collapse or catch fire, killing those under or on top of them.

Grain intake pits and grain bins are also a No-Go Zone!

# FARM ANIMALS

**Most people appreciate that bulls, boars and rams are dangerous but female animals with their young are just as dangerous and may also attack people as they try to protect their young.**

They see children, and especially dogs, as a threat to their newborn.

Children who come too close to a playful cow, sheep, pig or horse may be injured.

Keep dogs away too.

Children should be kept out of yards and pens where potentially dangerous animals are kept. Gates and fences should be built so that they cannot be climbed easily.

Ensure you have the time to fully supervise children when they are visiting the farm to see the animals. At busy times - such as right now when calving and lambing are taking place - be honest... you will not be able to fully supervise your children so just keep them away.



# SLURRY TANKS AND LAGOONS

**Children by their nature are inquisitive and will always try to get into places which are apparently inaccessible so fence off slurry tanks/pits/lagoons.**

Keep pits securely covered when not in use. Make sure tank covers are always in place and, if slats are removed, cover exposed areas of the tank beside the pump/mixer to stop anything falling in.

Remove any ladders or store them out of reach.

Slurry gases are very poisonous. Never put yourself in danger when mixing slurry, keep everyone away.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES

**Even apparently healthy livestock can carry disease which may be passed on to humans - particularly children.**

You've heard it enough times recently but after touching animals or their surroundings, hands must be well washed with soap and warm water, especially before eating food.

## HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

**It may appear obvious but take a look around your sheds, stores and barns and make sure you lock away any harmful, poisonous substances.**

Chemicals, pesticides, fertilisers, veterinary medicines, dosing guns and syringes must be put away in a safe secure place and people, especially children, shouldn't have access.



# A SAFE PLAY AREA

**If young children live on, play on, or visit a working farm yard it is essential that an area is set aside to allow them to play safely and to protect them from the many dangers.**

It should be a secure area with upright fencing to prevent children climbing out. It should also be close to home or farm house so they can be easily supervised.

**IN SHORT, FARMS ARE BUSY WORKING AREAS, FULL OF SERIOUS HAZARDS, SO  
KEEP CHILDREN AWAY**

# HOW SAFE IS YOUR FARM?

## ASK YOURSELF...

- Do you have a safe and secure play area for young children? Do they use it?
- Do you know where your young children are playing at all times? Can you see them?
- Can you ensure your children are fully supervised at all times when around the farm?
- If something were to happen while you were busy working would you know?
- Do you make your children wear High Viz when around the farm?
- Do you prevent children from playing in, or around, the yard and livestock?
- Do you prevent all children under 13 years from riding on tractors and farm machinery?
- Do you stop children under 16 from using the quad bike/ATV? Do you lead by example and wear a helmet?
- Do you secure all heavy wheels, gates, heavy equipment and stacked materials to prevent them from toppling over?
- Are dangerous areas (such as slurry lagoons) securely fenced to prevent children from gaining access and do you make sure tank covers are always in place?
- Do you make sure everyone washes their hands before and after visiting the yard?

# USEFUL NUMBERS

**999 EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**112 EU EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**105 UK POWER NETWORKS**

**03000 111 999 FARMING HELP**

**0300 111 4166 RSABI**

**0800 138 1678 RURAL SUPPORT NI**



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