

## Child and Public Safety on Farms



Farms can be dangerous places especially for children who do not understand the risks. Often children that are killed on Farms each year are family members.

Members of public may be also at risk on Farms if they wonder off public footpaths or when crossing fields containing cattle or calves.

Children up to the age of 18 are killed on Farms each year because they are working or playing there.

The most common reasons for accidents resulting death and major injury were: -

- Falling from vehicles,
- Struck by moving vehicles or objects
- Contact with machinery
- Driving vehicles
- Falls from height
- Drowning and asphyxiation
- Poisoning
- Fire
- Contact with animals

The Children who died were: -

- Being carried as passengers on agricultural vehicles or machinery
- Playing unsupervised on the farm
- Working/helping around the farm
- Not under proper adult supervision
- Trespassing.

If you have Children living on or near the farm then an assessment of the hazards of the fixed environment and the work activities should be carried out.

Think about: -

- The machinery you use and the visibility from the cab are there any blind corners.
- The environment such as slurry lagoon are they kept secure
- Areas that might attract children e.g. bale stacks and animal pens
- The use of chemicals and veterinary medicines and how they are stored.
- Contractors and their vehicles visiting the site.
- When friends of the children visit the farm.

You can help keep them safe by: -

- Providing a large play area with interesting activities
- Segregating children from work activities and traffic routes as far as possible
- Explaining to all staff that they must stop if they see a child in a 'no go area' and escort them back to a safe place
- For older children put up signage and explain to them the hazardous areas where they must not go.
- Clearly instruct contractors on procedures and about keeping their working area secure and prevent access by children
- Communicate procedures in case of an unauthorised child being present in the work area and escorting them back to a responsible adult.

Children under 13 years are prohibited from driving agricultural machinery and machinery used for work or driving to and from operations. It is illegal for children under 13 years to ride in agricultural machinery or machine or implement mounted on or towed by a tractor or other vehicle including a machine/implement pulled by a horse.

It is illegal to carry a child under 13 years of age in a tractor cab.

ATV's are considered to be self propelled vehicles and therefore it is illegal for them to be driven by under 13's or for children to be carried as a passenger.

Children under 13 years can be legally carried on a trailer as long as there is adequate edge protection to prevent them falling off. Suitable edge protection would comprise of solid sides, head and tailboards of at least 920mm high.

### **Moving Vehicles:** -

Moving vehicles can be very hazardous on a farm because of blind spots. Use mirrors on corners where you can. Very small children are very difficult to see from the cabs of tall vehicles such as tractors especially if they are close to the vehicle. Telehandlers with the boom in normal operation has blind spots and children cannot be seen.

- Always Safe Stop and lock and secure the vehicle.
- Never leave a vehicle running with the key still in.
- Avoid blind reversing as far as is possible.
- Ensure machinery is properly guarded
- Don't leave children unattended.



### **Falls from height**

Children can be naturally curious and sometimes will investigate and climb structures such as ladders, bale stacks, silos and equipment. They may also go out of bounds if they lose a toy or ball during play.

Some roofs may become accessible during sometimes of the year e.g. if an adjacent silage clamp is full.

They may become trapped or slip and fall if they cannot get down, if the structure is not secure or they fall through a roof surface that they did not know was fragile. They may be crushed if they climb a bale stack and a bale falls.

### **Things you can do to help prevent falls from height include:** -

- Locking storage areas where machines and equipment are stored
- Blanking off fixed ladders by using a gate or removing lower rungs
- Securely storing loose ladders with chains
- Staking bales, pallets etc. in away to prevent them from being climbed and also used as access onto other tall structures
- All buildings with fragile roofs should be signed as such

## **Public Safety**

Farming activities can also pose risks to third parties – including visitors, contractors and others such as walkers and cyclists that may come onto your land. The Farm risk assessment should also consider controlling risks to third parties. Precautions would include all that for reducing risks to children and additional measures such as :- providing warning signage advising on fragile roofs, vehicle movements etc. ensuring dangerous areas are securely fenced, keeping workshops and ladders secure etc.

### Rights of way

If you have people passing through on your land, you must minimise any risk of injury to them.

The Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 means that you must take care to make sure that any invited visitors onto your land are reasonably safe, and that there are adequate warnings of any danger. The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 extends some protection rights to people you have not invited or allowed to be on your land, such as trespassers.

Your duty of care under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 does not apply towards people exercising Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) access rights. (See <http://www.openaccess.gov.uk/wps/portal/lm/welcome>)

### Livestock

The two most common factors associated with injury to members of the public from livestock that the HSE investigates involve Cows with calves and walkers with dogs. Many members of the public do not realise that cows with calves can be a risk due to the cow's protective maternal instinct.

When deciding where to keep livestock it is important to consider the type of public access that there is in different areas of the farm for example – frequent groups of walkers with dogs, groups of children, infrequent walkers etc. This will help you decide which areas are suitable and what precautions to take.

Bulls of key recognised dairy breeds should not be in fields where a Public right of way crosses it or there is permitted access. If you are considering putting a bull in a field where access is permitted then its demeanor and temperate should be considered and monitored regularly for any changes.

Beef bulls should not be in fields with rights of way, footpaths or permitted access unless with cows or heifers.

When grazing cattle things to consider include: -

- Animals are generally placid
- Use fields not used by public when cattle are calving or have calves
- Will calves kept with the herd effect behaviour of older cattle
- Can you put a temporary fence alongside the public right of way to keep them both separate
- Consider offering an alternative route
- Plan the location of handling and feeding away from public rights of way
- Consider providing signposted footpaths to draw public along preferred routes
- Provide warning signage on gates /access points e.g. Beware of the bull

For more information see: - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais17ew.pdf>

