



Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, March 14 – 20, 2010

FACT SHEET #4

Let children play, grow and farm safely

Growing up on a farm can be a wonderful experience for children, however without proper supervision it can result in tragedy.

Between 1990 and 2004, 209 children under fifteen years old were killed on Canadian farms; and from 1990 to 2000 an additional 1,886 children were hospitalized for farm-related injuries reports the Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting program (CAIR).

“A farm is an industrial work site,” said Marcel Hacault, CASA Executive Director. “You wouldn’t think of letting your children play unsupervised in an active construction site – so why would you turn them loose on a farm?”

“*Plan • Farm • Safety*” is the theme of this three-year Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign. Each aspect of the theme will be promoted over the next three years. This year the campaign will promote “Plan” with safety walkabouts and planning for safety. In the second year, the focus will be on “Farm” including implementation, documentation and training. In the third year, emphasis will be on “Safety” including assessment, improvement and further development of safety systems.

The “Plan” year-long campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 14 to 20. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) deliver CASW in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The CAIR study indicates that three-quarters (74.2%) of child fatalities were work-related. Of these deaths, three-quarters (73.5%) involved an adult who was engaged in agricultural work. For example cases where a child extra rider fell from a tractor or where a pickup truck reversed over a child bystander. Of the remaining quarter (26.5%) of work-related fatalities, the child victim was working.

For children under fifteen, bystander runovers and extra rider runovers account for 40 per cent of child fatalities. Drownings represent 15 per cent of work-related fatalities and 45 per cent of non-work related fatalities. The most common causes of hospitalized agricultural injuries in children were falls from heights, working and playing with animals, and entanglement. Falls from heights were especially frequent in five to nine year olds.

Children under age five are particularly vulnerable to farm related incidents accounting for almost half (46%) of all childhood fatalities and a quarter of hospitalizations.

“The best way to keep youngsters safe is to create a safe play area,” says Hacault. “It doesn’t have to be expensive, but it does need to be well thought out.”

First, select a location that is removed from the farm activity. Preferably it will be adjacent to or in close proximity to the house. Ensure the location is sheltered from wind, free of pests (ants, snakes, rodents, etc.) and free of hazardous plants.

Second, surround the play area with a child protective fence and self-latching gate. Ensure it is sturdy, easy to maintain and a minimum height of 4 feet.

Third, choose play equipment. Quality play equipment does not have to be expensive. Choose balls, sandboxes or tree swings. Remember all structures that can be climbed should be positioned at least six feet from fencing or other equipment.

And finally, use protective ground cover such as sand to absorb the shock of falls under play equipment with elevated surfaces such as slides, monkey bars, and swings.

For more information on how to design safe play areas go to National Children’s Centre for Rural Safety and Health at www.marshfieldclinic.org/research/children/safePlay .

The CFA, CASA, FCC and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers to “*Plan • Farm • Safety.*”

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*** Free photos and cartoons are available to accompany this article at www.casa-acsa.ca .

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