



### Did you know?

According to Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting statistics, from 1990 to 2008, there were 248 recorded agricultural fatalities among children under 15 years of age. That's an average of 13 deaths a year. Approximately 44 per cent of those fatalities involved children under the age of five. The most common causes of child-related fatalities on the farm include being run over by equipment, drowning, or equipment rollovers. In many cases, fatalities are work-related,

though the child isn't necessarily performing the agricultural task at the time of the injury. So what can parents do to raise their children in a way that celebrates farm life, while keeping them safe? The answer is a lot, but it involves having a really good understanding of child development levels, abilities and limitations, as well as when and how to set clear rules and boundaries, so that everyone stays happy, healthy and safe.

### Keeping your children safe

In the eyes of a child, the farm can appear to be a wonderful playground. Kids are curious and excitable, and enjoy running around open spaces, exploring, hiding in unique corners, climbing on interesting looking structures and investigating machinery and animals. But, as you know, the farm can be a very dangerous place, especially for young children who don't necessarily understand the risks and consequences of their actions and may not be able to

react appropriately to dangers on the farm. For that reason, it is up to parents to be a child's eyes and ears, identifying and controlling hazards and keeping children out of harm's way until they can safely participate in various agricultural tasks.

### SETTING BOUNDARIES

**Child Safe Zones.** For your operation, evaluate the farm and the areas that may pose dangers to children. Look at your farm as if you were protecting your nieces / nephews visiting from the city. Once you have identified child safe zones, establish age limits for certain areas. For example, if a child is younger than 10 years old, they have to stay in the fenced yard area; if a child is 10 to 13 years old, they can join an adult and visit the barn, storage buildings, bin yard, or other designated area. By establishing safe zones on the farm, you can help all visitors, family and workers realize what your expectations are for the operation.



### Establish Rules for Additional Riders on Equipment.

For example, tractors or ATV's with no secured rider seat should not carry extra riders.

**Keep Children Out of Confined Spaces Including Grain Bins or Silos.** Do not allow children to enter these areas. Protect the entrance and keep access restricted.

**Establish Extreme Hazard Boundaries** and keep children out of these areas, including for example pesticide or fertilizer storage facilities, bodies of water, or manure pits (in large quantities



and enclosed spaces manure can produce deadly gases). Identify how you will protect children on the farm from areas of extreme hazard. Can a fence be installed to barricade a hazardous area (a simple snow fence may work)? Can materials be stored inside locked cupboards or locked buildings?

### CREATING A SAFE PLAY AREA FOR CHILDREN

While no farm can be completely child-proofed, you can create a **Safe Play Area** for your children. A Safe Play Area is a carefully planned, designated location with limited exposure to hazards including traffic, agricultural production and environmental concerns. It should be designated by physical boundaries such as fences, gates or shrubs and include safe, age-appropriate play equipment. Set safety expectations for the play area, establish safe play rules, and ensure your children understand them. Maintain the play area and be sure to supervise your children appropriately. Establishing a Safe Play Area will help to keep kids safe, while provide parents with a greater assurance that their children will be better protected from farm hazards. For more information on creating Safe Play Areas, visit [nagcat.org](http://nagcat.org).

## Assigning agricultural tasks to children and youth

### CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS

Did you know that the ability of a child to carry out an agricultural task is dependent on several factors, including:

- age;
- motor skills;
- cognitive function; and
- awareness of the world around them?

It is false to assume that physical appearance equates to mental and emotional competence. For example, although your child may be tall for their age and able to reach the clutch or brake pedal on a tractor, they may not be fully competent to safely operate that piece of equipment. That's why you need to consider your child's developmental stage when deciding if and when to assign farm chores to them. Once you are aware of your child's physical, mental and emotional competency, you can assign tasks to them that are appropriate for their abilities. The following table reviews developmental considerations from ages seven to 18, and the implications for potential agricultural tasks. And remember, every child is different, so be vigilant and adjust tasks based on your day-to-day assessment of their abilities. (Children under seven years of age are entirely dependent on adults to provide them with an appropriate and safe environment, need to be supervised at all times, and should not be engaged in agricultural tasks).



## Child development chart

AGE	PHYSICAL / MOTOR DEVELOPMENT	COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT	PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS	POTENTIAL AGRICULTURAL TASKS
<b>7 TO 9</b>	<p>Rapid increase in muscle tissue.</p> <p>Increased capacity for energetic movement.</p> <p>Learning to use small and large muscles.</p> <p>Period of slow, steady growth.</p> <p>Boundless energy / quick fatigue.</p> <p>Begins to deal with issues of location, distance, weight, force, speed and acceleration.</p> <p>Seeing characteristics of moving objects slowly improves.</p> <p>Can respond to left / right discrimination.</p> <p>Can perceive spatial orientation.</p> <p>One foot balance without looking becomes possible.</p> <p>Can walk two inch balance beam.</p> <p>Reaction time gradually improves.</p>	<p>Think they have greater cognitive and physical skills than they actually have.</p> <p>Attention span is 12 to 15 minutes.</p> <p>Concrete thinking.</p> <p>Oral instructions don't work well—demonstration is required.</p> <p>Developing sorting capabilities.</p>	<p>Want to accompany adults to undertake farm work.</p> <p>Want to test their skills and try new tasks.</p> <p>Quality of work is poor due to lack of skills mastery.</p>	<p>High level of supervision. Parents expectations are often too high.</p> <p>Parents must demonstrate task each time.</p> <p>Tasks involving motion are dangerous.</p> <p>Tasks must be of short duration.</p>	<p>No tasks requiring good eye-hand coordination.</p> <p>Short duration tasks that can be demonstrated easily and repeatedly.</p> <p>Tasks requiring accuracy and high quality should be avoided.</p> <p>Tasks requiring hand tools possible with supervision—no power tools.</p> <p>Feeding of animals with supervision, clean-up, yard and garden tasks, hand raking, digging.</p>
<b>10 TO 11</b>	<p>Eye-hand coordination slowly improves.</p> <p>Child can accurately judge the flight of a moving object.</p> <p>Steady growth continues for boys.</p> <p>Growth spurt may begin for girls.</p> <p>Girls may be larger and stronger than boys.</p>	<p>Short-term memory begins to improve.</p> <p>Attention span increases to 20 minutes.</p> <p>Still in concrete operations.</p>	<p>Do not take responsibility for their actions.</p> <p>Mistakes are blamed on others or situations.</p> <p>Task completion is still rare.</p> <p>Tasks are labelled as “interesting” or “boring.”</p>	<p>Same as for ages 7 to 9.</p> <p>Growth spurt for girls may lead to periods of clumsiness.</p>	<p>Same as for ages 7 to 9.</p> <p>Push mower appropriate on flat surfaces.</p>

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<b>12 TO 13</b>	<p>Very rapid growth.</p> <p>Coordination and clumsiness problems.</p> <p>Master kinesthetics (motion and direction).</p> <p>Test the limits of their physical abilities.</p>	<p>Some children may begin abstract thinking—those children can understand tasks without seeing them.</p> <p>Abstract thinkers can generalize previous task experiences to new tasks.</p> <p>Feelings of immortality—accidents or failures happen to others, not them.</p> <p>Trouble generalizing the experiences of others to themselves.</p> <p>Do not understand that physical size does not substitute for experience and judgment.</p>	<p>Children experience self-preoccupation, this leads to lack of attention to others working closely with them.</p> <p>Aggressive, risk-taking, rebellious towards parents.</p> <p>Work hastily to get tasks done.</p> <p>Parent's solutions are rejected in favour of their own solutions.</p> <p>Justice and equality are important.</p> <p>Fairness of task load between siblings emerges.</p> <p>Animal welfare and / or rights issues emerge.</p>	<p>Parents mistake size for ability.</p> <p>Children's ease of distraction must be considered.</p> <p>Motor skills are impacted during growth spurt.</p> <p>Tasks mastered earlier may now be difficult.</p>	<p>Potentially the most dangerous time due to high risk-taking, ease of distraction, clumsiness, and feelings of immortality.</p> <p>Limited power tool usage with supervision (monitor stage of growth).</p> <p>Hand tools still the best.</p> <p>Begin to incorporate tasks with higher physical requirements.</p> <p>Give more responsibility for follow-through with less supervision of low-risk tasks.</p>
<b>14 TO 15</b>	<p>Growth spurt continues for boys.</p> <p>Boys begin to surpass girls in muscle strength and size. Boys may have 2X more muscle and be 4X stronger.</p> <p>Girls overcome clumsiness as do some boys.</p> <p>Skills are improved through practice.</p>	<p>Abstract thinking is accomplished by most youth.</p> <p>Can think and project into the future.</p> <p>Can have trouble making a decision, even on simple tasks.</p> <p>Feelings of immortality still exist.</p> <p>Feel age and size substitute for ability.</p>	<p>Rebellious towards authority.</p> <p>Risk-takers, aggressive.</p> <p>Competing interests reduce interest in working on the farm.</p> <p>Behave like adults one day and children the next.</p>	<p>Parents can begin providing less supervision.</p> <p>Parents overestimate child's ability.</p> <p>Hurried task achievement may lead to poor quality results and potential accidents.</p>	<p>Trouble in making decisions can lead to poor reaction or accidents.</p> <p>Don't mistake size for ability.</p> <p>Can begin to practice adult tasks.</p> <p>Can begin use of power tools with adult supervision.</p> <p>Risk-taking may take child beyond safety limits.</p>
<b>16 TO 18</b>	<p>Obtains adult physical appearance.</p> <p>Most awkwardness is overcome.</p>	<p>Abstract thinking.</p> <p>Feel size and age can substitute for ability.</p> <p>Feelings of immortality.</p>	<p>Rebellious.</p> <p>Risk-taking.</p> <p>Aggressive.</p> <p>Competing interests.</p> <p>Competitive.</p> <p>Independent.</p> <p>Adult one day / child the next.</p>	<p>Can provide less supervision.</p> <p>Overestimate ability level.</p>	<p>Can begin adult tasks.</p> <p>Need to gain experience with adult supervision.</p> <p>Gradually increase tasks with experience.</p> <p>Don't delegate "old" equipment to youth and "new" to adults.</p> <p>Conflicting interests may lead to rushed completion, poor quality and dangerous shortcuts.</p> <p>Youth may try to push equipment beyond safety limits.</p>

## Legislative requirements for young workers

In addition to child development considerations, it is important to know and understand the legislative requirements connected with youth employment in your province. The following chart outlines the regulations governing youth employment in all provinces and territories.

<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>	Employment regulations permit the employment of children 12 to 14 years of age. Children under the age of 12 may be employed with the permission of the Director of Employment Standards. A child between 12 to 14 years of age can work up to 35 hours a week during a non-school week and up to 20 hours a week during a school week.
<b>ALBERTA</b>	Alberta permits the employment of children 12 to 14 years of age with the written consent of one parent or guardian. Child employees must complete a safety checklist and regulations protect hours of work allowed. The employment of children under 12 is prohibited. For older children between the ages of 15 to 17, general restrictions exist on the times of day that may be worked and supervision by an adult is required.
<b>SASKATCHEWAN</b>	Under Saskatchewan's employment regime, the age of 16 is set as the general minimum age of employment. An "absolute" minimum age of 14 has also been established provided those 14- and 15-year-old workers fulfill certain requirements. Additional requirements set out that they may not work more than 16 hours during a school week, and may not work later than 10:00pm on any day prior to a school day or before school starts on any day. Exemptions include: a family business employing only immediate family, and traditional farming operations.
<b>MANITOBA</b>	Children in Manitoba under the age of 16 may not be employed without a permit obtained from the Director of Employment Standards and the School Principal. The permit must be signed by a parent or guardian of the child. Hours of work are restricted to no more than 20 hours during a week of school and no employment is allowed between the hours of 11:00pm and 6:00am for children under 16 years of age.
<b>ONTARIO</b>	Children under the age of 16 may be employed during school hours upon the approval of the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor.
<b>QUEBEC</b>	Quebec permits the employment of children less than 14 years of age with the written consent of one parent. Regulations for children under 18 years of age prohibit work that is disproportionate to a child's capacity or would be detrimental to that child's education, health, physical or moral development. No employer is to employ a child between the hours of 11:00pm to 6:00am.
<b>NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR</b>	Children under 14 years of age may be employed in Newfoundland and Labrador but are restricted in the type of work they may perform. The type of work allowed is mandated by local regulation. Children under 16 years of age may not be employed without the written consent of the child's parent or guardian. Children are not permitted to work between the hours of 10:00pm to 7:00am and there must be a rest period of at least 12 hours between working shifts.
<b>NEW BRUNSWICK</b>	Children under the age of 14 cannot be employed in New Brunswick without a permit obtained by the Director of Employment Standards. Children under 16 years of age may be employed for no longer than six hours in any day and are not to engage in work that is "harmful." Children under 16 years of age may not be employed during the hours of 10:00pm to 6:00am.
<b>NOVA SCOTIA</b>	Nova Scotia permits the employment of children under the age of 14 as long as this work does not interfere with normal, healthy development or schooling. Work hours are limited to no more than eight hours a day on non-school days and no more than three hours a day on school days. Children under 14 years of age cannot work between the hours of 10:00pm to 6:00am.
<b>PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND</b>	Prince Edward Island permits the employment of children 16 years of age and under for age-appropriate tasks, with adequate training and adult supervision. Children cannot work in employment that is harmful to their health, safety or moral or physical development. Work is prohibited between the hours of 11:00pm to 7:00am.

<b>NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT</b>	<p>The Northwest Territories and Nunavut permit children aged 17 or under to be employed in any occupation with some exceptions. Employment may not be detrimental to the health, education or moral character of the children. Children are not permitted to work between the hours of 11:00pm to 6:00am.</p>
<b>YUKON</b>	<p>Children under 16 years of age may not engage in paid work unless excused by the Director or Superintendent of their school. Children under 17 years of age cannot be employed in occupations that are contrary to the legislation.</p>

### Cultivating the next generation

Raising your children on the farm is rewarding for both parent and child. As a parent, you must guide your child through the farm workplace, protecting them from the obvious, and often overlooked hazards on the farm while ensuring they have the skills, knowledge, and ability to undertake tasks appropriate to their abilities. If you instill a strong sense of safety awareness from the youngest age, you can help ensure your child grows into a safety-conscious farmer in the future.

### Resources

- [canadasafetycouncil.org](http://canadasafetycouncil.org)
- [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)
- [nal.usda.gov/kids-and-teens](http://nal.usda.gov/kids-and-teens)
- [nagcat.org](http://nagcat.org)



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