

http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/farm_safety.html

Farm Safety

Farm safety may seem like something only teens who live on farms need to know about. The truth is that everyone can benefit from learning about farm safety, even people who are merely visiting farms. Farming is a common form of employment, providing summer jobs for lots of teens all over the country.

Farm machinery, animals, chemicals, and storage areas are things that some teens ordinarily might not encounter - and they can pose a serious risk to people who don't know how to protect themselves.

Nearly 2 million kids work and live on farms in the United States, and as many as 22,000 are seriously injured and about 100 kids and teens die each year on farms. In fact, farm jobs have the highest rate of fatalities and injuries of all types of teen employment, which isn't surprising given that agriculture is considered to be the most hazardous industry in the United States. Although the majority of accidents happen to people who live on farms, a significant number of injuries or deaths have occurred to kids and teens who either work on or visit farms.

But it's not all doom and gloom: With appropriate education and safety precautions, farm-related injuries and deaths can be prevented - and teens can enjoy all the positive experiences that farms have to offer.

Safety Around Farm Equipment and Machinery

There are a number of appealing tasks on a farm for all ages, especially teens. Operating machinery and heavy equipment is one of the more common needs on the farm. This can be fascinating - as long as you've been trained in what you're doing and you're physically strong enough to work the equipment.

There are lots of obvious risks for teens who work with farm machinery - including tractors and other farm vehicles. First, the machinery has been designed for adults, which means that there are more risks for the younger teen who is still maturing. If you're asked to operate farm equipment, use your wisdom and judgment.

Some of the things to be aware of are machinery rollover and roadway accidents. And if you don't feel like you're in control of the equipment, stop what you're doing and ask for help. You'll probably be more respected if you do - no one wants a nasty accident.

For older teens, there are risks to operating farm equipment, too - the same ones that adults face, such as bone and muscle injury. The advice for avoiding problems is the same for older teens as it is for adults: Don't operate equipment under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Even some medications, like cold medicines, can impair a person's ability to react to possible dangers.

Even equipment as seemingly tame as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) carries risks. It's tempting to think of ATVs as playthings - they can be fun, after all - but in a farm setting, there's a certain amount of responsibility that goes with driving ATVs, tractors, and the like. Focus on being in control - on a farm, you'll need to watch out for many things, such as uneven terrain, other equipment, and even wandering animals. For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that teens under age 16 should not operate farm vehicles such as tractors and ATVs and that teens 16 and older who drive ATVs should have a valid driver's license. When riding ATVs, always wear appropriate helmets (the type designed for motorcycle drivers) to protect against serious head injuries. And don't allow younger siblings or friends to ride along.

Here are some other tips for operating farm machinery:

- * Just as you fasten your seat belt when getting into a car, use the seat belt that is provided on tractors to avoid being thrown from the tractor.

- * Wear appropriate clothes, including sturdy work boots. Don't wear baggy or loose clothing around machinery where it can get caught. Likewise, long hair should be tied back or kept under a cap.

- * Use safety equipment. Certain tasks may require goggles to protect vision and earplugs to protect hearing. People who work around noisy equipment are at risk for permanent hearing loss that occurs due to exposure to loud noise.

Safety Around Livestock

Though farm animals may look harmless and even cute, they can severely injure people if they become confused or feel threatened. Approach animals quietly and respectfully. Loud noises or sudden movements may startle an animal, causing it to become upset.

Stay away from animals with newborns - a mother may attack if she feels that her newborns are in danger. Always approach animals from the front so as not to startle them, and make a mental note of ways you can escape safely if an animal begins to behave unpredictably.

Zoonoses (pronounced: zoo-uh-no-seez), infections that animals may spread to humans, are also a concern on the farm. To protect yourself, always wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap if you've touched or fed a farm animal.

Other Farm Safety Concerns

Check out these additional tips for staying safe and healthy on the farm:

- * The pesticides and chemicals that are used on farms can be extremely dangerous. These materials should be kept locked away in marked containers with warning labels. Avoid handling them. In the event that someone is exposed to dangerous chemicals, call your local poison control center or the toll-free poison control number at (800) 222-1222.

- * Don't walk into grain storage areas and silos - it's possible to become trapped and suffocate under flowing grain. If someone else is trapped in a grain storage area, don't rush in to rescue the person - you could become trapped, too. Instead, call for help as quickly as possible.

- * In large quantities, the gases from manure, which is often used as fertilizer on farms, can be deadly. Try to avoid working with manure for long periods of time and stay out of manure storage areas.

- * Having your wits about you is important during all types of farm work. That means getting enough rest, taking regular breaks, and avoiding alcohol and drug use, which can seriously impair your mental and physical abilities.

- * Being on a farm can mean you're exposed to many types of weather - from the harsh cold to the hot sun. Remember to wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 every day, even on cloudy days. If

the temperature drops, always dress in warm layers to protect yourself.

Be Prepared for Emergencies

Even with all the right precautions, accidents still happen. One important rule for families who live or work on farms is that family members should always be aware of where everyone is and when they are due to return so they can provide help as soon as possible in an emergency. It's also a good idea to know how to get help in the event of an emergency - by calling 911 or the local emergency number or the poison control center if necessary. When calling 911, be prepared to state exactly where you are and what the problem is - and remember to stay on the line until the operator says it's OK to hang up.

Experts also recommend that all teens learn CPR and basic first aid, especially if they help to care for younger siblings or elderly relatives. Contact your local hospital or the American Red Cross for information about courses in your area.

This information was compiled by
http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/farm_safety.html