

Making farms safer places to work and live

Deaths or injuries on farms happen much more often than they should. Farmers are asked to think safety before starting any job to help make farms safer places to work and live.

Preventing accidents

From quad bike accidents to animal attacks, farming kills and injures more people than any other industry in the UK and Ireland.

Tragically, most accidents are caused by simple factors such as habit, haste, fatigue, and improperly-maintained machinery.

Many farmers think 'farm safety last' rather than 'farm safety first' but most farming accidents are avoidable.

Safety must never be an afterthought. By taking just a few minutes to think about the job ahead, preventable accidents can be easily avoided by using simple safety practices.

Machinery

Poorly used or faulty machinery is a major cause of death and injury on farms.

Farmers come into contact with a host of machinery daily such as tractors, combines, choppers and hay balers which can bring dangers.

People can be injured by front-end loaders, falling from a moving tractor, or being struck by its wheels.

Also, hands, hair and clothing can be caught by unguarded PTO shafts or other unguarded moving parts such as pulleys and belts.

The following should help you and others to stay safe on your farm:

- keep all guards in place on tractors and equipment, especially PTO guards
- make sure that all mirrors and cameras (if fitted) are clean and fully functional on tractors and telescopic handlers
- make sure equipment is stopped fully before clearing blockages
- operate tractors with enclosed safety cabs or roll bars
- take care when mounting or dismounting tractors or telescopic handlers
- keep the brakes on all your machines properly maintained, especially the parking brakes
- only start your tractor from the driver's seat

- make sure that your tractors starter system works properly
- when pulling heavy machinery equipped with hydraulic brakes, make sure the brakes are connected to the tractor and work properly

You should:

- never try to repair machinery if you do not have the correct tools and equipment, and are not competent to do so
- never run a tractor down a slope to start it
- never work near overhead power lines when tipping trailers or using high reaching machinery
- never check hydraulic pipes for leaks by running your finger or hand along them while they are connected and under pressure

Farmers are encouraged to take the appropriate steps before doing any repair work on machinery.

The correct equipment must always be used for the job; this includes wheel chocks and a trolley jack or suitable props. Farmers should also consider employing a competent mechanic to carry out repairs.

Animals

Many farmers never stop to consider why animals behave as they do and, more importantly, what this behaviour could mean to their personal safety.

Livestock can be unpredictable, something that even the most experienced farmer can't completely plan for.

Handling livestock always involves a risk of injury, and this is increased when an animal becomes frightened or has been startled.

Animals will fiercely defend their food, shelter, territory and young. When frightened or in pain, animals may react in ways that threaten your safety as well as their own.

Although most animal incidents are not fatal, many men, women and children are needlessly injured every year due to a lack of safety awareness.

It's important to stress that safe handling equipment is a must, not a luxury.

Falls

Farming carries an above-average risk of falling accidents. Any fall from height can lead to long-term injuries or sadly even death.

Most accidents of this type happen either because the work is not properly planned, the risks are not recognised, proper precautions are not taken, or the equipment used is either defective, not appropriate, or used incorrectly.

While working at heights is always a risky business, there are several things

which can be done to reduce those risks. The following checklist can help prevent falls from heights:

- have you thought about the best way to get up to the job?
- can you use a cherry-picker or a materials handler (including a fork lift)?
- do you have a suitable cage or platform attached to the machine?
- have you done everything you can to avoid using a ladder?
- is the ladder in good condition, rungs and stiles sound?
- is it long enough, reaches to at least 0.9m above the stepping off point?
- can it be tied or footed?
- is the roof material fragile, for example asbestos cement sheet?
- have you got crawling boards or staging to cover the asbestos cement by bridging the joists?
- can you avoid stepping on the roof-lights?

Remember: you can either fall off or through the roof of a farm building.

More farm safety information

You can find out more about farm safety on the links below:

Always take your time to think about what you are doing, as making a few simple checks could actually save a life – maybe your own.

More useful links