

Farm safety

Practical solutions to six common causes of injury in the rural industry. Owners, managers and workers on rural properties have a duty to ensure safety is a priority.



Quad bikes

Quad bikes are a popular workhorse on the farm, but are also responsible for a large proportion of fatalities and injuries. Their short wheelbase and high centre of gravity make roll-overs a higher probability.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risk of an incident:

- ✗ insufficient rider training to be able to handle the bike
- ✗ children riding adult sized quad bikes
- ✗ excessive speed
- ✗ rough terrain, steep slopes and unseen obstacles
- ✗ overloading with after-market attachments or fitting inappropriate accessories
- ✗ carrying passengers on bikes that are not designed to carry them.

✓ Solutions

If a quad bike is the best vehicle to perform the task, then:

- make sure riders are properly trained and competent in the use of the bike
- wear a properly fitting helmet
- wear eye protection, gloves, sturdy footwear and clothing that covers arms and legs
- don't be tempted to carry passengers if the bike isn't designed for it
- look out for rough or uneven ground, especially after rain or flooding
- make sure children under 16 do not operate an adult quad bike
- maintain bikes for safe operation
- take extra care when carrying liquid loads as the weight will shift when turning corners or crossing slopes adding to instability
- make sure someone knows where you're working on the property, and when you are expected to return.

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Tractors



Tractors are used in a variety of farm activities and must include a roll-over protective structure (ROPS) to reduce the risk of injury to the driver in the event of a roll-over.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risks:

- ✗ steep slopes, irrigation channels and hidden obstacles
- ✗ passengers riding on guards or without seats
- ✗ starting tractors from the ground or climbing on or off a moving tractor
- ✗ branches, rocks or bales falling onto tractor operators from heights
- ✗ towing implements or trailers.

✓ Solutions

Only use tractors that are suitable for the task and:

- ensure operators are competent in operating the tractor and other equipment
- wear a seat belt as it may save your life in a roll-over
- assess the risk prior to operating on steep slopes
- do not carry passengers on tractors
- always put the tractor into neutral before starting the engine
- always stop the tractor and apply the brake before climbing off.

Utes and farm vehicles



Utes are useful general transport vehicles around the farm.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risks:

- ✗ unrestrained passengers being carried in the tray or on trailers
- ✗ unsupervised children near moving vehicles
- ✗ inexperienced drivers
- ✗ poorly maintained vehicles.

✓ Solutions

A ute may be a convenient vehicle to use, but always:

- ensure drivers and passengers use seatbelts
- do not carry passengers in the back or on the tray
- ensure the driver is licensed and uses safe driving methods
- maintain the vehicle regularly
- keep children away from vehicle driveways and moving vehicles.

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Unguarded machinery



Examples of machinery that need guarding include tractor power take off (PTO) shafts, soil and grain augers, and other belt, chain or sprocket drives. All guarding must comply with the relevant Australian Standards.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risks:

- ✗ loose clothing, jewellery or hair which can get caught in machinery
- ✗ clearing blockages to conveyors or harvesters without isolating the power and locking them out.

✓ Solutions

The best solutions are to:

- ensure all exposed belts and drives are guarded against accidental contact
- keep all guards in place until the machinery is isolated and all power sources turned off and locked out.

Hazardous manual tasks



Workers on farms are exposed to manual task injuries when handling animals, uncoupling equipment, lifting and carrying loads and repeatedly bending and reaching when performing daily tasks, or doing so in awkward positions.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risks:

- ✗ a lack of proper induction training for workers
- ✗ the absence of mechanical aids to lift heavy loads or animals
- ✗ repetitive movements over a long time
- ✗ normal work benches and storage units being too high or too low creating awkward work positions
- ✗ excessive use of vibrating tools or equipment
- ✗ slips, trips and falls due to uneven ground or slippery surfaces.

✓ Solutions

To reduce the incidence of hazardous manual tasks:

- ensure suitable induction training for staff and awareness of manual task risks
- design work areas with the task in mind
- reduce repetitive tasks as much as possible
- have frequent rest periods or rotate work tasks
- eliminate/minimise the risk of musculoskeletal damage by using mechanical lifting aids where possible.

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Animal handling and mustering



Injuries may occur when handling livestock due to unpredictable behaviours.

! Issues

A number of factors add to the risks:

- ✗ a lack of horse-riding experience or understanding of the animal temperament
- ✗ poor yard design and maintenance
- ✗ equipment not suited to the task.

✓ Solutions

Some solutions are to:

- assess the competency of horse-riders and match them with an appropriate horse
- wear an approved helmet when horse-riding
- seek appropriate training to conduct animal handling
- design yards and handling facilities to ensure safety is the priority, then consider ease of stock handling and separate workers from livestock as much as possible
- build appropriate escape routes into the yard design
- if possible use external levers for opening and shutting gates.

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PN11327 | AEU15/5439

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