

4.0 Child safety on farms

4.1. Risk assessment

FARMS are a high-risk area for children.

- Children aged under 16 suffered 21% (38) of all fatal farm accidents between 1996 and 2005.
- Tractors and machinery caused most child accidents (58%).
- Drowning accounted for 21% of child deaths.
- Over 70% of child deaths occurred in the presence of an adult.
- Most fatal child accidents happened to children aged five and under (39%).

Adults have a huge responsibility to make sure that the risks posed to children on a farm are assessed and controls put in place to prevent death and injury. The following charts highlight the main risks to children on farms.

Figure 1: Child deaths (1996-2005)

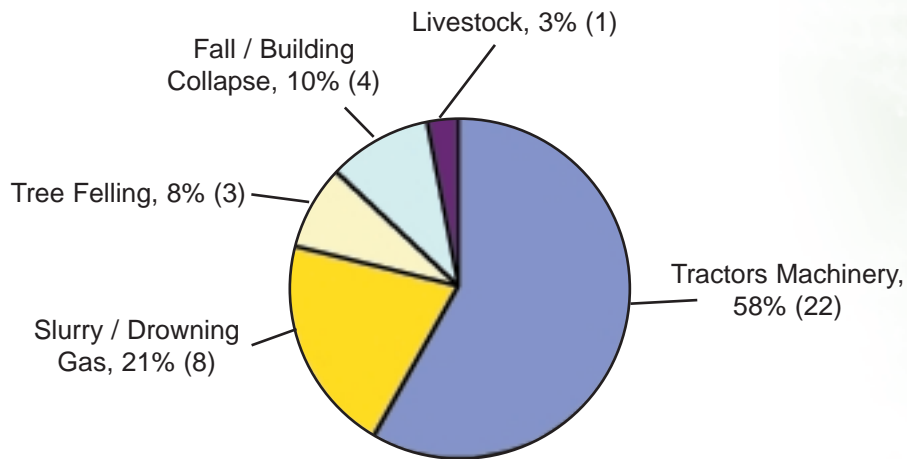
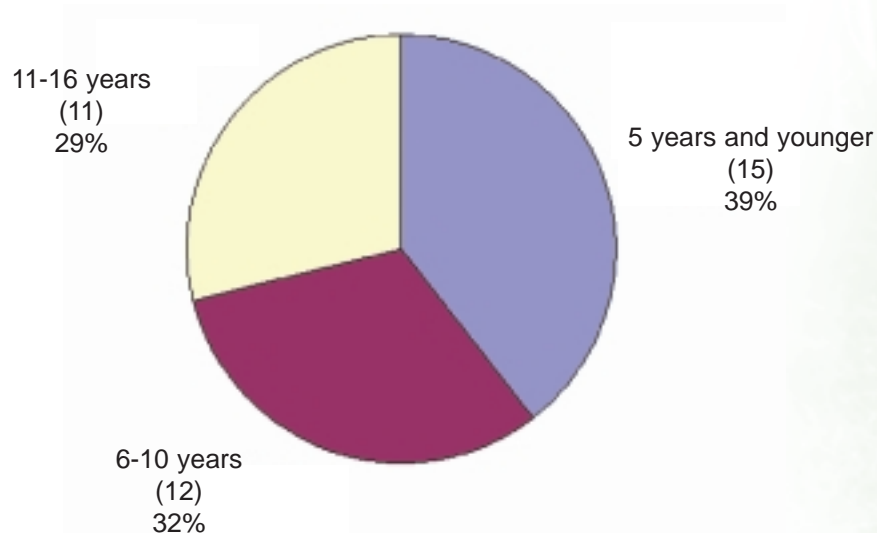


Figure 2: Age of fatal-accident child victims (1996-2005)



4.2. Preventing child injury and death from machinery

CHILDREN die on farms mainly because they are struck or crushed by tractors, agricultural machines or tractor-drawn equipment.

Young children should not be allowed unsupervised access to the farmyard. Provide a safe play area in sight of your dwelling house and inform all children of the dangers on the farm.

Children under 14 should not be allowed to drive or operate tractors or machinery. Children over 14 should be allowed to operate tractors only after they have received formal training (see section 17 on competence and training for people at work in agriculture).



Provide a secure and safe play area for young children

Children over 14 should be closely supervised by a responsible adult and they should be properly instructed on the safe use of the model of tractor used. No other child should be on or in the vicinity of the tractor.

Some farm machines are high-risk due to the components involved, complex control systems, substances used or the specialist knowledge required to operate them safely. Because of this, nobody under 18 should be allowed to drive or operate such machinery. This includes towed or self-propelled harvesters, power-driven machines, sprayers, slurry spreaders and chainsaws.

Having young children in a tractor cab is unsafe, as they can:

- fall from the doorway or rear window
- interfere with the operator's control of the vehicle
- distract the operator
- unintentionally operate controls (eg, parking brake) when the operator leaves the cab

When children have to be carried in the cab, it must be fitted with a properly designed and fitted passenger seat with seat belts.



Instructing young people is crucial for safety.

Children under 14 should not be allowed to ride on other agricultural machines, including trailers, unless it is safe for them to do so.

Children should never operate, maintain or clean dangerous machines, such as self-propelled harvesters and power-driven cutting or crushing machines.

Children and young people should be excluded from areas where chain-sawing or tree-felling is taking place.

Use of vehicles on public roads is governed by the Road Traffic Acts. Persons driving on the public road require a valid driving licence for the type of vehicle being used.

4.3. Workplace risks to children

CHILDREN are naturally curious. They will often get into seemingly inaccessible places. Make sure they are kept away from dangerous areas, such as slurry pits and slurry storage areas, sheep-dipping tanks and grain stores. Provide a safe play area, with child-proof fencing, in sight of your dwelling house. Above all, control hazards that could pose a risk to children. For example, make sure that slurry pits are surrounded by fencing.

Children may be tempted to climb on gates or wheels, particularly large tractor wheels. Gates and pillars should be properly erected so they don't fall over. Tractor wheels should be stored on the flat or, if upright, should be firmly secured.



Safety vigilance is necessary, especially when high-risk work is in progress

Children are attracted to stacks of bales, pallets or timber. Stacks should be built carefully, so that they do not collapse. Fencing should be erected to prevent children gaining access to hazardous areas.

4.4. The risks that animals pose to children

CHILDREN should not be allowed near dangerous animals such as bulls, stallions, rams, stags and female animals with new-born young. Particular care should be taken to ensure that children are not present when animals are released from buildings after being housed.

4.5. Legal provisions related to children and young persons

IN addition to the duties under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, further legal requirements apply to the safety and health of children and young people.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Children and Young Persons) Regulations 1998 require farmers to identify what work is suitable for children and what work is not suitable. The regulations cover children and young people employed by farmers, as well as other children (eg, family members, visitors).

4.6. Parental and adult responsibility

THE main responsibility for securing the safety and health of children and young people rests with adults. All family members and people working on farms are required by law to do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the safety and health of children and young people on farms.

Research shows that an adult is usually present when a child is killed in a farm accident. The adult who is present could prevent most deaths to children on farms.

Research also shows that:

- children who get instruction on safety remember and follow the safety rules
- parents who know how to prevent childhood injuries are far more likely than those with limited safety knowledge to have adequate control measures in place

Childhood injuries are likely to be serious in nature. A major study carried out in the United States and Canada showed that emergency hospital treatment would not have prevented 95% of childhood deaths. The only way to avert child deaths is to prevent accidents from happening.



Instruct children and young people about safety measures

4.7. Programme for national schools

A PROGRAMME called CHILDSAFE - be safe on the farm, has been circulated to national schools in rural areas. The programme, available in video or CD format, is aimed specifically at 5th and 6th classes. Check to see if your child has viewed this programme.

4.8. Code of practice on preventing accidents to children and young people in agriculture

THE Health and Safety Authority has issued a comprehensive statutory code of practice that gives guidance on ensuring the safety and health of children and young people in agriculture. You should check this code when considering what work children and young people should and should not do on your farm.



Discuss safety issues and motivate your children to take safety precautions