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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Like the Back of Their Hands: Farmsafe Australia Campaign Focusses on Enhancing Safety for Ageing Farmers

As part of National Farm Safety Week, Farmsafe Australia is drawing attention to the simple, practical behaviours, habits and skills that can be implemented to improve safety culture on Australian farms. The campaign, entitled 'In Safe Hands' follows six different farm businesses across the country, to find out how they develop practical solutions to work, health and safety challenges and implement them effectively on farm. The campaign aims to inform and educate farmers on how to reduce the risk of life-altering injury and fatality on Australian farms.

As the agricultural workforce ages, it is crucial to address the unique safety challenges faced by older farmers. With 44% of on-farm fatalities occurring in farmers aged over 60, recognising these challenges and implementing effective strategies can significantly enhance safety and wellbeing.

The physical demands of farming, combined with the natural effects of ageing, such as reduced strength, slower reaction times, and declining vision and hearing, increases the risk of injuries. To mitigate these risks, farmers can adopt several strategies, including modifying the way a job is done to be less physically demanding, succession planning, and regular trips to the GP to monitor health.

Jamie Grant of Kielli Cotton at Jimbour Queensland has been farming for over forty years and has made decisions to implement new strategies to ensure that he minimises his own risk of injury. Jamie has introduced robotic spray rigs onto the farm to reduce the amount of time he spends in the tractor, allowing him to focus more on tasks that keep his mind and body active.

He also acknowledges the importance of mixing the experience of older farmers on his team with the youth and vitality that comes from younger workers. From his perspective, it's a natural cycle of the more experienced farmers providing training and advice while also feeling comfortable asking for physical help when they need it, both generations being able to provide support to each other.

"Ageing farmers are the backbone of our agricultural heritage. It is our responsibility to ensure they have the tools and support needed to work safely and continue their invaluable contribution," says Felicity Richards, Chair of Farmsafe Australia. "By making simple adjustments to work routines and providing targeted information and training, we can significantly reduce the risk of injury and promote a healthier working environment."

Mrs Richards, herself a cattle farmer in Tasmania, emphasises the importance of proactive measures: "Jamie's implementation of robotics shows us firsthand how adapting tasks and incorporating new technologies can make a big difference. We owe it to our older farmers to make sure they feel safe and valued on the job by finding new ways for them to continue to contribute to the business."

Committed to keeping you safer on Australian Farms

This National Farm Safety Week, Farmsafe Australia is encouraging farmers to consider new strategies to help them mitigate the risks that are a natural part of ageing on farm. Ensuring the safety of ageing farmers is not just about protecting individuals; it's about preserving the legacy and sustainability of farming communities. By implementing these strategies, we can create a safer, more supportive environment for our older farmers, honoring their contributions and securing the future of agriculture.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT

Stevi Howdle

Email: showdle@farmsafe.org.au

Mobile: 0488 298 499

About Farmsafe Australia

Farmsafe Australia is an industry not-for-profit, farmer-led organisation and the leading Australian voice for farm safety, dedicated to promoting practical measures that prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of individuals on the farm. Farmsafe is committed to fostering a culture where the well-being of individuals is at the heart of every agricultural operation.

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5 Strategies to Consider Implementing to Mitigate the Risks of Ageing on Farm

1. **Changing Work Design:** Modify tasks to be less physically demanding. This might include investing in new technologies, using ergonomic tools, automating heavy lifting with machinery, and redesigning workflows to reduce physical strain.
2. **Training and Education:** Regular education and training, both formal and informal, is a great way to reduce risks. Training can be tailored to the needs of older workers to ensure they are aware of increased health and wellbeing risks and new technologies that can make tasks safer.
3. **Succession Planning:** Preparing the next generation to take over more physically demanding tasks can reduce the burden on older farmers. This involves mentoring and gradually transferring responsibilities to younger family members or employees.
4. **Health and Wellness Programs:** Promoting regular health check-ups and providing access to wellness programs can help older farmers stay physically fit and mentally sharp, reducing the risk of injury.
5. **Flexible Work Schedules:** Allowing older farmers to work flexible hours or part-time can help manage fatigue and reduce stress.