

11 October 2023

Farmsafe Toolbox Talks – Transcript of Podcast #17

'What the Numbers are Saying' with Kerri-Lynn Peachey, AgHealth Australia

Host: Dr Richard Franklin, James Cook University

Guest: Kerri-Lynn Peachey

Voiceover:

“Welcome to Farmsafe Toolbox Talks, a podcast series focusing on farm culture, leading to a healthier and safer working, living and playing environment. Here's your host, Richard Franklin.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Today's podcast is brought to you by Farmsafe Australia under funding from the Australian Government's Department for Agriculture, Water and the Environment. I'm your host Richard Franklin. Today we talk to Kerri-Lynn Peachey, from Ag-Health Australia Research Center for the University of Sydney at the School of Rural Health in Dubbo. Kerri-Lynn is the Farm Safety Research Manager at Ag-Health Australia. Her main role is to provide accurate, timely, concise and relevant data about injuries occurring on farms or due to agricultural work. Key to these activities is information held within AgHealth's National Farm Injury Database of all fatal incidents with information sourced from the National Coroner's Information Service and a media monitoring service. Ag-Health Australia is the sole agency nationally assessing this information in an in-depth manner to direct research opportunities. In addition, she operates a mixed cropping and livestock enterprise with her husband outside Moree, in northern New South Wales, therefore acknowledges the importance of protecting every person in the farm environment. She was also the lead author on a recent article exploring farm animal related incidents on farms over 20 years, published in the Journal of Agri Medicine. Hi, Kerri-Lynn, thanks very much for being here today. Can you tell us just a little bit more about yourself?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Hi, Richard, thank you so much for asking me to be a part of the podcast series. I was born and raised on a farm. So therefore, I studied agriculture. And as you said, I still farm with my husband outside Moree, in northern New South Wales. We also have two beautiful boys as well, who love all things about farm life. I have always had a love of the land. I knew I wanted to do something within the agricultural industry. When I started work, I started with managing rebate programs to making farm equipment safer. I then moved into the area of farm safety promotion and education, prior to doing what I'm doing today in the farm safety research base. The data which I collect is the backbone of farm safety prevention and without this data, there is no evidence to indicate there has been any change. So that's a little bit about me and where I've come from.”

Committed to keeping you safer on Australian Farms

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I’d forgotten you started off with the rebate program and the work putting ROPs on tractors and other bits and pieces. So, let's talk about this paper that's come through and the article that you've put together. 20 years is a fair bit of data to kind of crunch and have a look at. Can you tell us a little bit more about the article and what you found?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, so sort of over the period of 2001 to 2020, unfortunately, we didn't see little change in the mean number of animal related injury deaths on farms across Australia. While we did see a small reduction from the 1998 to 92 data, we didn't over our 20 year period. And not surprisingly, horses and cattle were involved in more than 80% of the incidents. More than half were work related and males dominated over females. And the unfortunate part about this is that those aged 60 years and over represented almost half of all deaths, and a majority of these occurred in the state of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, which is quite understandable given the vast number of livestock enterprises throughout these states.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, interesting, isn't it? No real change in the number of deaths related to animals and that's what we're talking about here is...is only kind of the death part of it. I guess you were talking before, but it's not totally surprising that it's horses and cattle. But was there anything that came out that surprised you at all?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Well, look, Richard, not really over the time. Like, it's unfortunate that we haven't seen a change, you know, given, you know, the amount of funding that was out there, sort of like from the 2001 to 2010 period, but sort of, you know, with a drop off in that sort of, you know, 2014 through 2017 period, we sort of...we sort of have...we've seen as a bit of a rise there... but unfortunately over that 20-year period, it's just unfortunate that we haven't seen a change.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I think it's really disappointing. It's very static kind of numbers coming through. And a real challenge, I guess, for people on the land who work with horses and or cattle, and making sure that they do some things to keep themselves safe. What were some of the other animals that also we saw involved in deaths of people on farms?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Besides horses and cattle, there was like, there was sheep, there was pigs. You've got your general insects, which would be your bees, your wasps, your spiders, we did have a camel. So yeah, they were sort of the other animals that were involved and most of those were, again, the same from either being struck by the animal, being trampled on by the animal, around those injuries.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I guess the bees and wasps were anaphylactic kind of results out of those. Is that what we're seeing there?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“That's...That is correct. Yeah. And the snakes was poisoning. That's correct.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah. So, I mean, a wide range but...but two particular animals that we're kind of looking at here. So, what are you going to do about horses? Let's take horses first. What's kind of some of the solutions that was coming out of the data or things that were missing, that people should be aware of when they're thinking about working with or around horses?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, well look, given, you know, that horses were responsible for more than half the death and these were around, people were riding the horses and fell, or they were kicked by the horse, or they're leading the horse, or they were trampled by the horse. So, when we look at trampling by the horse, you know, the majority of those were in the youngest age group. So they were, you know, either being around with Mum and Dad, or, unfortunately, there was a few of those who were not being supervised at the time, so have taken off from Mum or Dad or maybe the carer. So, we need to really stipulate and work forward to supervision around children, whether it be cattle, whether it be horses, whether it be sheep, whatever livestock it may be, but just the supervision around children with livestock is very important. For the females, predominantly, they were recreational, whereas all the males were work-related. So, with the females, we...I think we really need to look at, you know, you know, the horses that they're using, you know, are they, you know, significantly trained, you know, are they, you know, are they aware of what horses are being around horses? Are they coming in as a visitor? And then, you know, are they wearing a helmet? Unfortunately, you know, we had 32 head injury cases. And where we knew that helmets were used, which was 29 of those 32 cases, there was only eight cases that were wearing a helmet at the time. So, helmets is a big focus that we need to work on. Like we know that they talk about, it's been so hot with the Akubra. But we are seeing, you know, a slight... with the...with the girls, when you look at the girls with riding horses, we are starting to see some of those numbers rise with the helmet. But whether that's come from Pony Club, or not? We have to look at that further.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, so I guess one of the big challenges is to make sure we get helmets on people on horses. And obviously, there is that kind of misconception around heat and helmets as well. And I note that there are some really nice helmets coming out that have bit of a brim on them that meet the Australian standard for a health horse helmet as well.”

“So, let's talk a little bit about cattle. You talked already about working around animals, what are we seeing with cattle? What's going on there? And obviously with children's supervision let's keep it to any other kind of practical solutions as well?”

Kerri Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, look, yeah, look, definitely look at with...with the cattle, the majority of them are working in the cattle yards. So, they were either drafting the cattle herding the cattle into another pan, like loading or unloading the cattle and feeding or inspecting the cattle. As a result of that, unfortunately, 70% were trampled by the cattle, or the beasts whichever it may be. So, and most people were in contact...came in contact with a bull, followed by cows, and then a steer. So a steer is an uncastrated male calf to become a steer. But most importantly, looking at cattle is using the hierarchy of control. So, we know we have control measures out there that could eliminate some of these hazards. So, for the most important one is like if you do identify a rogue cow or bull, like, is there an opportunity to remove it from the mob, and sell it? If there's not an opportunity to...well, if there's not an opportunity to sell it. But if there's an opportunity to remove it from the mob, you know, remove it prior to bringing the rest of the stock into the into the cattle yards to eliminate that risk. So that's, you know, one important thing of the hierarchy of control. And if you can't do that, then there might be other opportunities like you know, it looking at the safer yard designs, because the yard design is very important to how cattle work because they don't like to be in a in a trapped in environment. And especially when you've got cattle with...have old cows that have calves because they become very, you know, anxious and aggressive because they don't want anybody to go near their calves. So that's, you know, true sort of things within the hierarchy of control that we can sort of work towards to help eliminate these hazards.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I guess the other thing that I was interested in was the large group over 60. You know, I think it was nearly half of all cases were aged over 60. And I think in your article, you talk about this being suggestive that there are a group of people that do have good experience around animals, but are still being obviously injured and killed by them. Any more detail about what's going on there and any thoughts around what we can do with that space?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, look Richard, as you're probably well aware, our farmers they're working well beyond their retirement age, and the average age of farmers continues to increase. However, as I did suggest in my study that normal physiological and cognitive changes that are associated with the aging processes can underpin these incidents. And as you know, we are all aware as we age, things just don't move like they should move anymore. So, you know, your ability to be able to jump or move out of the way of livestock poses an increased risk of injury to yourself. Nevertheless, though, there is those opportunities for implementing the hierarchy of controls for these older farmers. So, as I was just talking about, you know, removing the rogue animal from the mob, but there's also things like, you know, having raised walkways, so that you're not actually down in the pen with the animals, you're actually raised on a walkway above them. So, you're removing yourself from the hazards or there is opportunities for building like, little hide behind places within...within the pen. So, if the beast does happen to get upset, you can hide yourself behind that to protect yourself until you know someone else can help alleviate that beast from...from the pen to ensure your safety. But it's also another important a lot of these farmers are working by themselves. So due to the remoteness, they are working by themselves, but you know, if possible, you know, try and have someone there to be with you...to work with you throughout those time periods, or carry an EPIRB or something like that, that can alert someone if you are injured.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I guess that's some really good advice or thinking about what might be high risk times. I think also, as we age through farming, it'd be nice that people start to put in play some of these strategies before they get into their, their 60s,

and I guess if farming age group are getting older, think about retirement in their 70s or 80s, or whenever that might occur. So, I think it's really important just to pick up on that a little bit more about that hierarchy of control. Do you want to just take us through that and talk about, you know, what are we talking about when we talk about the hierarchy of control, just to remind people?"

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

"Yeah, so basically, the hierarchy of control is looking at the most hazardous, you know, things towards the less hazardous. So when we're looking at, for example, when we're looking at the older farmers, or we're looking at, you know, cattle with the mustering so when we're going out mustering on horses, can we look at using, you know, a farm, motorbike or a farm, you instead of going out on the horse, so that is one opportunity that you can look at, and then it comes back down to like, if you identify a rogue animal, therefore you're completely if you remove that from the mob, you're completely removing that agent that's going to cause you injury, by removing that completely. And like, I know, that's not possible in all situations. You know, farm, cattle farming is a part of Australian agriculture, and we need them. But if there is that one person that's causing the problem, or that one animal, I should say causing that problem, you know, look at removing it, because then you'll find that your hazard is removed. And then it comes back down to also looking at, you know, there is training opportunities around there. You know, so like identifying how a beast works, you know, you know, like when your awareness around them, because the more aware you are of how they work and how they change from being in an open paddock to being in a confined environment like the cattle yards, you're then going to be more aware of their surroundings and your surroundings into, you know, to make yourself safer, and comes back to PPE as well, which is the lowest thing but you know, they are very important when it comes to riding horses."

Dr Richard Franklin:

"Yeah, thanks for that. So as we move through the hierarchy from the very top, it's about eliminating the hazard. Then the next one down is about substituting it for lesser risks. The one below that is about engineering it out, which obviously goes to your yard design as you're talking about before. The next one down is about administrative controls and the way that you might put in place systems. And as you said, the very low one is the PPE but often critical, when we talk about riding the horse, as part of it. Can I just ask a little bit of a question about where does this data come from? And how are you kind of collecting up to bring it together?"

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

"So, for...for this...for this study? The inclusion involves sort of two interrelated processes. So the first process we use is a commercial tracking media company. And that is used to scan you know, over, you know, 1000-2000 Depends on the day, the week, of news articles and publications across Australia. These articles and publications are scanned for various search terms. So, we use, for example, farm injury, farm deaths, farmer, farm worker, to locate fatalities which occur on a farm. Well, this instant doesn't necessarily capture all the incidents that are reported or all the incidents that occur on a farm. So, we then use a second approach to capture all incidents, and this relies on information that comes from the National Coronial Information System. So, for those out there that are not aware of the National Coronial Information System, it is a secure database of information for reportable deaths to Australia and New Zealand coroner. So that information is then stored so we can then cross reference. If we do happen to pick one up in the media tracking, we then cross reference it into the Coronial Information System. And then it's put into our National Farm Injury Database, which I manage and look after. So, but given that we don't always capture them in that media process, we need that interrelated process to ensure we're not missing any cases."

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, really interesting. And I guess, it's good to know that the coroner is looking into why people are dying on farms or elsewhere across Australia, and you then pull this information and have a look at it. We've got 20 years that you've talked about in this grouping, looking at just obviously, animal related deaths. I want to just go...I think you talked a little bit about the Epi-pen, what are the suggestions around an Epi-pen? Because obviously, we saw the bees and wasp stings come up. So, advice there please?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, look, just...just ensuring you know, one important thing about an Epi-pen is, you know, ensuring that the Epi-pens that you have available with you, especially if you're an anaphylactic you know, person, then you need to ensure that it is not out of date, you know? That it is in...within manufacture date. So, because you cannot give it to a person, if it is out of date, so ensuring that you check that on a 12-monthly or six-monthly basis to ensure that they are up to date.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I guess if you're running a business, you probably one of the questions you do need to ask your employees is whether they've got any issues in that space. So, making sure that you're well prepared from a first aid, and as you say, having kind of an Epi-pen or equivalent, sort of available for you if you absolutely, if you need it. It's probably good to have one just in case you have a visitor or somebody rocking up on a farm. But there is a cost, obviously, to doing that.”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yes. Costs involved, yes. And important to just have, you know, ensure somebody is accredited with their farm...with their first aid certificate. That's most importantly.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I guess that goes again, if we're talking about the hierarchy of control into that kind of management space there. Making sure that people know what to do if something goes wrong and can't talk enough about first aid. You know, one of the podcasts, we talked to the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the importance around that as well. So, really great to talk to you about that. I'm just going to change gears a little bit being both sitting in the Ag-Health kind of center there, as well as being a farmer yourself. What does good farm safety culture look like to you? And what do we need to do to bring this up and make sure it happens on other farms?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Look, I think the most important thing, I think, if you've got employees, I think the most important thing is, you know, is to engage with your employees, you know, engage them in that whole Workplace Health and Safety progress. Like don't just do it yourself, if you're the manager or the farm owner, like don't just do it yourself, like engage the employees, because they're the ones that are out there on the day-to-day basis, and they're seeing things that are happening, and things that could go wrong. And there's something that they might see that you might not see. So, for me, the farm workplace culture needs to be, you know, that engaging process with your employees. And if you don't have employees, if it's, you know, if it's just, you know, if it's dad, like if it's just a family orientated one, like, you know, if it's just Dad and son, for example, you know, they need to work together to work that process through of the Workplace Health and Safety

process, because, well, dad might be doing as much as what he used to, he might still be in control of that, but the sons during the day to day work. So, it's, you know, ensuring you have that engagement and the communication about what is happening, so that you can work together to ensure that you have a safe workplace and a great culture moving forward.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Yeah, I'm glad you brought up communication. We did a podcast on this early on, and people can go back and have a bit of a listen to that, as well. But also, it's embedded in the legislation across Australia that you actually do need to talk with and consult. And I agree with you, I think it's one of those really key parts of ensuring that you've got a handle on what's going on, and you're letting others know what's going on, as well as part of that. I just want to go back to you your farm what what's a normal day look like for you on the farm? And what are you doing to, I guess, bring in some real practical elements around safety for you, your family and those you work with?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Yeah, look, well, just a practical day. Basically, we all meet down at the farm for farm shed, to work about what activities are going to happen that day, or what tasks are going to happen that day. But our most important thing, given that a lot of accidents happen from farm machinery and farm equipment not being well maintained, is that you know, our employees have got to ensure that the maintenance of every piece of machinery is done and up to date. So we have what we call a WOGAM in place. So, a WOGAM is basically, it's just an acronym of water, oil, grease, air and miscellaneous. So those five things have got to be checked upon before any piece of machinery is started or operated on that day of work. So with the Miscellaneous, it can be things like PTO covers, checking if it's a ROPs checking that the ROPs is in place. Yeah, just anything guarding, making sure all the guarding is in place making belt...making sure belts are in place. So that's the actual start of our day. So then if anything's picked up on that, then that goes up onto the whiteboard in the shed, if anything's got to be fixed, and then it's placed to someone to it's for that activity is placed, allocated to someone to actually fix that. But that's, that's the morning for our progress. And then, sort of in the afternoon, you know, depending on daylight savings and...and the workload, but normally, we finished about five o'clock, and we sort of returned to the workshop. And, you know, make sure that the machinery is cleaned down before it's shut off and safely placed back into whether it be the shed or whether it be in its allocated pad where our machinery goes, and just making sure that keys are removed, because we do have kids in our work environment, and we do have visitors with kids.”

Dr Richard Franklin:

“Beautiful. Well, sounds like a great way to start the day. It's the first time I've heard WOGAM and hopefully, people will remember that...that's a great little tip for everybody to remember as we finish off the podcast. Just before we do though, is there anything else that you want everybody to remember as they go home today?”

Kerri-Lynn Peachey:

“Look, I just think it's most important. Just look around your surroundings, you know, and think about the tasks you're going to do. And you know, just think, is this the safest way we can do it? Is there another way we can do it, that could be safer? So yeah, just you know, look at your surroundings before you start a job. You know, just think, ‘Oh, is this safe?’ If



it's not safe, then let your employer know or let the farm manager know that you don't feel comfortable in doing this. Because you know, it's at the end of the day, we want everybody to return home."

Dr Richard Franklin:

"Awesome, very wise words to finish up on! A big thank you, Kerri-Lynn, for being on the podcast today and all the best for your future research, work, farming and farm safety work. If you want to know more about Ag-Health visit aghealth.sydney.edu.au or type Ag-Health into your search bar. And remember, if you want more resources about how to be safe on your farm, please visit farmsafe.org.au. Today's podcast is brought to you by Farmsafe Australia under funding from the Australian Government, Department for Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Thanks for listening to Farmsafe Toolbox Talks. I'm your host Richard Franklin. Bye for now."

Voiceover:

"This has been a Farmsafe Toolbox Talks podcast with your host Richard Franklin, brought to you by Farmsafe Australia."