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**Farmsafe Toolbox Talks – Transcript of Podcast #8**

**'The Next Generation is Putting Safety First' with Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year, Caitlin Radford**

**Host: Dr Richard Franklin, James Cook University**

**Guest: Caitlin Radford, CO Agriculture**

**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, Department for Agriculture, Water and Environment. I'm your host Richard Franklin and today I'm talking to Caitlin Radford from CO Agriculture. Caitlin is a fifth-generation self-employed farmer from Moriarty on the northwest coast of Tasmania. And for those that don't know, that's very close to Davenport, where the Spirit of Tasmania comes in. She's the first female farmer in her family, although multiple generations have been farming down there in Tasmania. In 2020, she was named the Australian Apprentice of the Year across all industries, after completing her Cert III in Agriculture as an apprentice on farm with her parents. What a wonderful background for us to be talking to you about, Caitlin, so thanks for being here today. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do?"

**Caitlin Radford:**

"Yeah, thanks so much for having me on. So, where do I start really? So we're a mixed vegetable and livestock farm in Moriarty, run across three farms. We grow wheat, grass-seed, peas, carrots, potatoes, beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, hay, silage, and sheep and cattle. So, a little bit of everything down here."

"Yeah, so going back a couple of years now to after I completed my apprenticeship - so my partner and I started CO Agriculture when the opportunity to share with my grandparents came up. Rubis and Gladys have 112 acres, and we now rent this property, which is really great. So, at the end of 2022, we purchased our first farm of 136 acres or so in Moriarty, a handy only 2km down the road from Mum and Dad, and 2.5 km from Nan and Pop, which makes it really easy to share gear. And for that we're grateful."

"So, I also have a passion for horses, and I've been riding since I was little. I represented Australia and have a couple of national titles there and I also have a little dressage coaching and freestyle music business to do with that as well."

*Committed to keeping you safer on Australian Farms*

“Also, just because I've got lots of spare time, as we all do, I sit on a few different committees, including Rural Youth, AgFest, our Tasmanian Agricultural Education and Training Partnership Advisory Panel, as well as a few others - but I won't go on there. So yeah, I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity to promote agriculture to many groups - groups, including Rotary Clubs, high schools, TAS TAFE students and the like.”

“And in 2022, I was named the Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year, which was a competition put on by Rural Youth Tasmania.”

“So there's been a little bit going on. But yeah, so this year looks a little bit different, obviously, expanding - Owen and I have doubled our farmland since last season, which has been a little bit hectic. And we've also put on a young 19-year-old apprentice, Jordan, just to help with the day-to-day operations, because it was a little bit more than what I could handle. Owen works from Hobart so he's 3.5 hours away. So, he's here when he can, which is great.”

“And we're really noticing this year, how different it is bringing in a non-family member to the farm, because traditionally, it's sort of only just been us family. So that's added a whole different dimension to work life, and especially the work, health and safety side of things on the farm.”

#### **Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Okay, fantastic for you to be here! And I'm really excited that we're talking to the next generation of farmers coming through and congratulations on being the Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year. That's a really wonderful achievement! And I think just shows the hard work that you guys have been putting into your farm and the work that you do.”

“But I wanted to kind of dig into a little bit about a normal day - and I know there's no such thing as kind of a normal day - but what does a normal day look like for you? And you've just talked about -- you've got two different properties. So what do you get up to?”

#### **Caitlin Radford:**

“Well, as you said, there's no such thing as a normal day. It depends on what time of year it is, really. So winter, we're lambing and doing general farm maintenance and budgets and all of that fun stuff. In spring we're starting to work ground, ready for the vegetables to be planted. And yes, summer and autumns pretty well flat-out – irrigation, spraying, spreading, and harvesting, depending on what crops we've got in.”

“So today, for example, we've been drilling grass, spreading some slug bait on some Brussels sprouts, I've got an irrigator started and hopefully will jump in a truck for a couple hours and then give some lessons this afternoon. So, every day is definitely different.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? I mean, I've talked to lots of people and everybody goes, ‘Oh, agricultural is so diverse’, and I think this was one of the challenges when we start to kind of think about risk on the farm and how we control that and how we keep people safe and how we develop up. I mean, you're an Apprentice of the Year as well and kind of thinking through the skills that we need to bring in. So, what are some of the common risks that you see in your enterprise?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“Yeah, so there's a lot because we are so diverse in our enterprises on farm. It definitely adds a lot more risk that we've got to be aware of.”

“So, sheep and cattle are obviously a big risk in that you don't want to get in the way of them when they're in a bad mood! But making sure that we've got suitable yards and handling equipment - so we built a new shearing shed up at my Pop's place to help with that, because obviously, we've got to be mindful of contractors coming in and making sure we're looking after them as well, not just ourselves.”

“Machinery has lots of moving parts, some equipment that we have does need upgrading - and so they might have little idiosyncrasies that we've got to fine tune and make people aware of when they jump in them. So that can be a little bit tricky.”

“But it's honestly most of the common activities that we do every day, like lifting a hay bale, or even just going walking across the paddock that might be lumpy. Like you don't know, someone can trip and roll their ankle, or they can hurt their back when lifting. And we know that the body stressing is the biggest cause of injury in agriculture. And it's definitely true. So, we just make sure that it's all the little activities where people are getting too comfortable that we just have to remind them that they've got to stop and think, because otherwise, they just get done without a second thought.”

“We're also located on a main road, so transporting to different properties can be tricky. And we've got to be careful of that, you know, making sure we've got escorts or the blinkers, and flashy lights and all that sort of thing.”

“So, there are lots of common risks, but making sure that we have all the appropriate paperwork in place does act as somewhat of an insurance policy for us as well. So there's many different sides to it.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Yeah, that's great. I mean, having a good safety system makes a big difference. I think I just wanted to pick up a little bit, you talked about the idiosyncrasies of your machinery, and I think this is so true, no matter where I go, people are – ‘When you do this, you kind of got to, you know, hold on to this bit over here and push this bit over here to make it work’. And so how do you, when you bring new people on the farm, deal with that kind of situation where you know, you know,

that piece of machinery, but they don't? So what are you doing there?"

**Caitlin Radford:**

"Yes, we're starting to put different policies in place and writing up more procedures. So, making sure we've got a procedure located where the side by sides are kept. And then you know, one of the old tractors we're writing up a procedure to go in that one. So, because you got to turn the key and then let it come back slightly -- and make sure you got your foot on the clutch to make sure it starts. So just making sure people are aware of that."

"But mainly Jordan, she's been the one that's come in. So, making sure we're taking the time to sit with her, explain to her, make sure she's happy and comfortable. And also make sure that she's getting training, because we know that there's no such thing as common sense, which can be a little bit tricky as well. So, making sure that we explain things, even if you think they might know them. We're going to double explain that again. And then we know that we've said it, so it sort of can't come back to us as well. So, there's many different ways to look after that sort of factor of things."

"But yeah, the biggest thing is making as many procedures as we can and really taking the time to explain to someone - not just be like, 'Can you go jump in that tractor'? And they've never seen it before."

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

"Yeah, sounds great. I mean, good communication is so essential, isn't it? -about sort of farm safety... And I think, you know, people get really concerned about writing policies and procedures, but really, it's a communication tool at the end of the day, and helps you understand what you know, and put it down on paper as part of it."

"So, yeah, so what else do you do to ensure this kind of the safety of those working or visiting your farm?"

**Caitlin Radford:**

"Yeah, so we're really lucky here in Tasmania, we've got Phil and Stu from Safe Farming Tasmania, and these boys are like an iconic duo down here in Tassie. They're absolutely fabulous! So, the boys come out to our farm and help us to put together a new safety management plan. I've got a massive folder behind me here that you can't quite see. But it's got all of our policies and procedures in it. You know, sending them to contractors, not just ourselves as well, making sure our contractors, like our spray contractors got his chem cert and spraying license and all of those sorts of things, and making sure that we've got all of our signs on farm as well - so entrance signs, biosecurity signs, obviously, biosecurity's big everywhere, but here especially in Tasmania - making sure that we're not bringing in diseases and being mindful when we go in from different properties."

"So, after merging with my parents, we had to redo all these policies to come under a new company and all the new details. And that's been a great way to really get on top of all of this."

“So, we've also got the four wheelers and the side by sides on farm, which need extra care, of course, so Jordan, who's our apprentice is completing her Cert III in Ag, which will give her competency in all of these units on our farm. And we were able to pick the ones that we thought were most suitable to us. So, her quadbike, Chem cert, and that sort of thing.”

“And we're also taking full advantage of training, whether it's courses online or in person, webinars, scholarships, and anything like that. And through Rural Youth Tasmania, of course, which Owen, Jordan and myself are members. We put our names down for as many subsidised training courses as possible. So basically, we're just trying to gain as much knowledge as we can to make sure everyone's across all of the new policies, procedures, laws, and that sort of thing.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Yeah, that sounds really great. And I think the ongoing training is a really important part of everybody's life. I mean, yeah, obviously, I've got a bias. I sit here in the university and love training and love learning as part of that. But I think it is a challenge, you know, that you got to balance up the workplace and the work that you do and train people up and great to hear that you kind of got an apprentice that you're bringing on in your footsteps as well, which was really nice.”

“What is also some of the other challenges around sort of farm safety that you're seeing in your area or on your farms?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“So, we know it can be really easy to get sloppy sometimes, especially if you're in a hurry. And sometimes there's a lot of jobs that are only two-minute jobs. And sometimes we think that it's going to take longer to go get the PPE than it is to do the actual job. So just making sure that we're putting PPE anywhere where we think that might be needed. So, keeping a pair of goggles and ear muffs in the side by sides in all the tractors and that sort of thing.”

“So we've just got to make sure that our culture around safety is really good on farm, because we know that that can be a bit of a hard topic. So, it really needs to be our number one priority. So, without the workers, there is no farm. And we can get into a lot of trouble quicker than we think.”

“I really find that the hardest part about farming, especially intergenerational farming, is that knowledge is kept in our brains and not written down. I know my dad has a wealth of knowledge about his property, and he could tell you anything that you wanted to know. But I would not be able to go into his house and find anywhere where that stuff is written down. So again, that comes back to our procedures. And, you know, for our pumps, making sure we've got procedures for that, like this is how you turn it on, so we don't blow mains and that sort of thing. So, I think the challenge is, is really getting the knowledge down on paper, because it can only take one incident that might cause a death or injury and those years of knowledge is gone.”

“And it's really a friendly reminder that we do need to have those policies and procedures in place to ensure that succession can happen as smoothly as possible and succession doesn't have to be from family member to family member, it can be non-family members, or an incident on corporate farms as well. So, we just need it be all on the same page and

aware of what we've got in place on the worksite.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“That sounds awesome. And again, you've brought up the issue around policies. I really like kind of your thinking about making sure that you kind of got the equipment that you need for the job, right? Yeah, look, I think we all go, ‘it's going to be two minutes, and I've got this bit of equipment, I'll just use it even though it's not the right piece’. I think it's some really nice advice about thinking through that and getting it.”

“And I really liked your comments about the intergenerational challenges and benefits. I mean, I think you know that intergenerational farming is really exciting. But lots of people have lots of knowledge in their head, and how do you go about finding that?”

“So what else are you doing to kind of address some of these challenges? And, you know, maybe some tips you'd like to give to others? I know, you might not feel like you can give tips. But what are they?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“Yeah, so interestingly enough, last year, I went and completed the farm managers program that was put on by Rabobank, that was up in Hawkesbury, in June last year. And as part of that course, we could choose to do a project at the end of it. And for my project, I focused on the work health and safety side of the business when establishing a new farm or creating or updating an existing business. So, through that project, I investigated different apps or technologies such as Zero Harm Farm or Safe Ag Systems, just to see how they could improve efficiencies and communication around some farm safety and for ourselves and others.”

“So of course, it's tricky, because there's only five of us within the business, which is quite small, where I've got another friend who was on the course and she's from a massive corporate farm, and they've got lots and lots of workers, which is obviously, they probably take a higher priority to that than we do. So, reflecting on what could be most used to us and be able to share with others, it was clear that the main theme of the course was really around management of staff, key people and resources.”

“So, like we mentioned before the communication, everything comes down back to communication. If we don't have a safe farm, we expose ourselves to so many risks. And just about every unit that we completed on the course had something to do with the health and safety of us and others, for managing people and the importance of priority self-care and communication and the like. It really highlighted that we needed to take better care of ourselves and plan better to allow others to come and go within the business.”

“So, we're really just aiming to reduce injuries so that we can improve the efficiencies within the business and reduce sudden succession. So, part of my project, and I'm probably rambling a little bit here, I actually created a survey monkey.

As I set this up, I just had 10 basic questions and shared it to as many people as I could, before I had to submit my project.”  
“So, I had about 45 results. And 60% of people believe that we treat the safety of family members different than non-family members, which I found really interesting. And I think that this might come back to the fact that if something bad happens, you don't think that your family member is going to sue you or chase you up for money, you know, that sort of thing. Whereas we most likely think that outside people are a lot more likely to do that. So, I really feel like that does have something to do with it.”

“But yeah, so there was a lot more statistics to come out of that. But the overall impression was that a lot of people had never filled out an incident report form. So 64.44% of people hadn't filled out an incident report form. And 80% think that family farms are more relaxed with safety than corporate farms, which was another interesting fact. So I just try to use all of this information that I collected to put in place and use it as a template going forward. Whether we purchase a new farm, or someone else wants to template I don't mind. So we just hope to keep working with Phil and Stu to share this information around farm safety as well.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Yeah, I think it's fantastic that you did a survey and I'm a bit of a data nerd. I'd like to play around with the numbers and look at what's going on. I thought it was fascinating, I think, that you know that 60% think that we treat family members differently, you know, is fascinating. I think it's probably true. And you've hit on some of the points there. I think the other thing that was interesting, which you didn't mention before, but we were talking about earlier, is also that most people aren't using any software or apps or anything like that. So, you know, we're still pretty old school, when it comes down to the safety space and doing that.”

“Did you come across any apps that you found more or less useful, or why were people using them or not using them?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“I think that most of it comes down to the size of your business, and obviously, with some of them that are paid subscriptions, not all of them are free, which also comes into factor. So, like we use Ag World for our data keeping for our crops, but it doesn't have any safety factors on there. So, I've actually used Zero Harm Farm and through that setup, and you can put little maps around all your farms, and little hazard icons, depending on what the actual hazard is. So, you can say that there's power lines here, or there's a big ditch here, we've got pumps over there, all that sort of thing. And I can actually send that to anyone that might be coming on.”

“I think there is use for a QR code within that as well. It's not necessarily practical for us. And it's hard. Sometimes we might be on board. But contractors, getting them on board can be a little bit tricky, because most of the time, they're in just as much of a hurry as anybody else and they think that they don't need to do it. But I know that there are a lot of farms in Tassie using the QR codes and that sort of thing, which is really great to see.”



“So basically making sure that they're accessible, they're easy to use on our phones. And my Dad, he doesn't use any electronics, he writes in in a little paper diary still and gives that to Mum, and she updates the paddock records. So, I think a lot of it is either generational or just your mindset around it.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“I think also, you know, you don't need fancy systems to be safe on farms. And, you know, I think the work that you've been doing sounds awesome with all your policies and the chats and making sure people know what's going on.”

“So, what other tips would you give to farmers about safety and anything else you want to kind of pick up on?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“Yeah, well, like you said, I feel a bit bad, or it's a bit hard to give tips to others, especially because I'm so young and so new at the beginning of my farming career still. But I think the best thing that anyone can do is just take advantage of all the free help out there. Whether it's on the internet, or through free services, like we had here with Safe Farming Tasmania with Phil and Stu.”

“Keeping people safe doesn't mean you have to spend lots of time and money. The set-up is the biggest task. And that's probably what people dread the most. But once all the policies and equipment are in place, it's easy. From there, it's just maintenance and keeping the culture of safety alive within your business. You really got to show that you care for your employees and mean it. Some people forget how much value our staff actually have within our business. And we really need to foster a culture for growth and not just a revolving door.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“Yeah, so you pick up a little bit on workplace culture, particularly around safety. So, anything else you want to add about kind of a safe workplace culture?”

**Caitlin Radford:**

“Yeah, I think a safe workplace is where everyone knows that we're doing our best to keep them safe, and that they also take it upon themselves to value their safety and that of others. Safety needs to come from the top down, but it also needs to be a shared value among staff, and that they know that you won't put them in danger. And hopefully they won't do the same to you.”

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

“I think that's a really nice sentiment. It actually fits really nicely within the legislation across Australia that there is a



shared responsibility. Obviously, there's a higher responsibility for those that are in charge. But all of us on farms or any workplace have responsibility. Are there any other benefits that you've seen from safety coming through?"

**Caitlin Radford:**

"Yeah, so there's many benefits to safety, as we know. But some of these really, that I've seen on my farm -- there's improved health and well-being, greater productivity, high performance, and the like."

"And we're also able to take our folder, our massive folder, to our insurance broker. And we actually got a reduction on our workers' compensation. So, you're also saving money, which was really fantastic. And that only happened earlier this week, so it was really great to be able to add that in today. So just that free folder that Safe Farming put together for us, saved us a lot of money."

"So, it's really been great to see the culture shift from my parents and my grandparents, especially around Jordan mainly coming in. So, dad never let any of us ride a motorbike without a helmet. And he'd always do his best to keep me safe, especially when I did my apprenticeship. And now I'm just really trying to pass that on to others."

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

"Yeah, that's awesome! And really great to hear you got a reduction in your insurance! I think that's a really nice outcome of it and lots of things and lots of benefits from it. So, before we finish up - any final tips or anything that you'd like to have people remember?"

**Caitlin Radford:**

"One thing that I'd like to leave you with is that I think that safety is easy - death and injury are hard. So, we've got to do our part to keep everyone enjoying our wonderful industry so that we can all be safe and make a difference."

**Dr Richard Franklin:**

"Well, Caitlin, a big thank you for being here today. Really great to hear about your experience and I look forward to following your career in farming and the wonderful things that you've done to date and very exciting the mixed farming that you've got going on down there and Tasmania and obviously the beautiful produce that always comes out of Tasmania that we all love."

"I think if people want to know more information, they can go to [farmsafe.org.au](http://farmsafe.org.au). There's a lot of resources on there as well, but also picking up on what Caitlin was talking about before. There are a lot of local resources in each state and territory. So please, again, you know, work with your local Workplace Health and Safety Group or others that are part of that, including the farmer organisations that are about."



So, thank you very much, Caitlin. Really appreciate it. Keep safe, stay well. Look forward to chatting to you in the future.”

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**Voiceover:**

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