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Safer Farms / 2025

AGRICULTURAL INJURY AND FATALITY / TREND REPORT



Farmsafe
AUSTRALIA

**Second
Chances.**

WHO KNOWS HOW MANY YOU'LL GET?

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Felicity Richards



If you've ever raised kids on a working farm, you'll know the tightrope walk that it can be. You're out the back shifting stock or trying to finish a job before the weather turns, and meanwhile, you're thinking, are you managing too much while they play in the safe area off to the side? Sneaking glances, juggling tasks, and wondering if they're going to stay where you left them, safe and out of harm's way?

I've had my own near misses. Moments that still make my stomach drop when I think back on them. I've seen my kids get too close to situations that could have ended very differently. I've watched my husband and our workers walk into high-risk jobs day after day, and I know the quiet relief that comes when they walk back in at the end of the day, whole and safe. But I also know the weight of 'what if?' That question has followed me and so many other farming families around for years.

That's why the theme of this year's campaign, *Second Chances – Who Knows How Many You'll Get?*, hits home. Because in agriculture, we all have stories. We all have moments that, on another day or with slightly different timing, might have changed our lives forever.

In the past 18 months, we've continued to see unacceptable numbers of fatalities and injuries on Australian farms. The *2025 Safer Farms Report* reveals some of the worst figures we've seen in recent years and behind every number is a family like mine; a child, a grandparent, a worker, a friend. Someone who should have come home.

And yet, we still hesitate to talk about it. We brush it off. We say, "That's just part of the job," or "It was a freak accident." We rely on luck far more than we should. But luck runs out. And too often, we wait until after tragedy strikes to take safety seriously.

This campaign is about breaking that cycle. It's about encouraging every person on the land to reflect on the close calls we've had the stories that didn't make it to the news but left us shaken. When we talk about those moments, we start to chip away at the myth that farming is just dangerous by default, or that near misses are normal. We start to realise that they are warning signs, opportunities to change course before it's too late.

One of the biggest cultural shifts we need to make is around how we talk about risk and responsibility. It's easy to think that because we've done something a thousand times, we're safe. But as we've seen, familiarity can be fatal. Tools and machinery we use every day, from tractors and augers to quad bikes and chemicals, remain dangerous, no matter how experienced we are. And as we age, or as our minds become distracted by the many pressures of life, our reaction times slow, our judgement clouds. Complacency sets in. That's where near misses come from.

As Chair of Farmsafe Australia, but also as a farmer, wife and mother, I know we need to look at safety through a more compassionate, human lens. That means creating space for conversations about mental health and fatigue, about the lack of childcare and the impossible juggle of work and family. It means understanding that time pressure doesn't just come from the paddock, but from wanting to make it to the footy game, the school concert, the family dinner. And it means not blaming or shaming ourselves or others but instead looking at every near miss as a second chance to get it right.

We've designed this campaign to focus on some of the biggest contributors to risk: fatigue, complacency, burnout, time pressure, communication breakdowns, and child safety gaps. Each theme is rooted in real stories, and that's deliberate. Because storytelling connects us. It allows us to learn without the cost of injury or loss. It helps us reflect, adapt, and look out for each other.

To the farmers, contractors, workers, and families reading this, I hope you see yourself in these stories. I hope you share your own. And I hope you take this campaign as the permission we all need to slow down, speak up, and act before another 'close call' becomes something worse.

We are not powerless in the face of risk. We have choices, every day. And every time we choose to speak up, change a process, or rethink a job, we give ourselves and those we care about another second chance.

Let's not waste them.

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Stevi Howdle



2024 will be remembered as one of the most difficult years for farm safety in recent memory.

In 2023, we recorded a historic low of 32 on-farm fatalities. It was a moment of cautious optimism, a sign that safety messaging was cutting through and change might be taking hold. But just one year later, in 2024, 72 people lost their lives on Australian farms, more than double the year before and the highest fatality figure in over two decades.

This devastating statistic is more than a number. It's a wake-up call. A reminder that safety gains are fragile, and that every life lost has a ripple effect: families grieving, communities affected, and futures rewritten in an instant.

The figures in this report are confronting, but necessary. They show us where harm is happening and challenge us to look deeper at what's contributing to it. They reveal that severe injuries, including amputations and hospitalisations, have remained consistently high for over a decade. And they highlight something often invisible in official data: the near misses. The 'close calls' that, if left unspoken, teach us nothing and change nothing.

I feel a responsibility not only to speak to the data, but to elevate the stories behind it. Because while the headlines focus on tragedy, what we hear every day are the near misses; the "I shouldn't be here" moments. The times someone got lucky. These stories matter. They carry warning signs. And those warnings are only useful if we act on them.

That's the thinking behind our *Second Chances* campaign, launched for *National Farm Safety Week 2025*.

It shines a light on those near misses, not to provoke fear, but to encourage reflection. On farms, there's a long-standing culture of brushing off danger, of pushing through. But when farmers survive a close call, many feel something deeper than fear; they feel relief. Relief that they're still here. Relief they get a second chance to do things differently. And often, a desire to share so others don't have to rely on luck the way they did.

Storytelling has always been central to agriculture; how knowledge is passed down, how identity is shaped. But some of our cultural stories need updating. For too long, we've celebrated toughness, risk taking, and 'common sense' as safety strategies. But safety is about using foresight, setting boundaries, and giving the next generation of farmers a better example to follow.

The topics explored in this year's report; fatigue, communication, mental health, child safety, complacency, are areas where small changes can have powerful impacts. Whether it's taking five minutes to plan a task or choosing not to do that 'one last job' while tired, these decisions matter. They save lives.

And we're hearing from farmers who are making those decisions. Who are changing or fixing something after a scare. Who are leading safety conversations with their staff and families. These actions don't make them less capable; they make them better operators.

This year's *Safer Farms Report* is more than a record of what's gone wrong, it's a roadmap for where we need to go. Whether it's the rise in fatalities involving side-by-side vehicles, the continued risks associated with

tractors and quads, or the invisible toll of stress and exhaustion, it's clear that safety isn't just about equipment. It's about behaviour. It's about culture.

Over the past 12 months, we've seen extraordinary engagement from farmers, workers, and communities across the country. Many have connected with our campaigns, downloaded our resources, and, most meaningfully, shared their own experiences.

And thanks to a generous \$2.5 million commitment from the Federal Government, Farmsafe Australia now has the opportunity to extend our work over the next three years. This funding allows us to grow our ambassador program, invest in practical tools, and deliver more campaigns and training initiatives tailored to the needs of real people on real farms. In many ways, it's a second chance for the safety system itself to work better for those who live and work on the land.

To our members, supporters and industry partners - thank you. Your advocacy and involvement are helping to shift the national conversation. And to WFI, our sponsor of this year's *Safer Farms Report*, your ongoing support ensures we can continue to share these insights with the people who need them most.

There's no single fix. But there is momentum. There is learning. And there is choice.

As you read this report, I encourage you to reflect on your own second chances, not with shame, but with purpose. What have they taught you? What could they teach someone else?

Because on Australian farms, who knows how many second chances you'll get?



MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR

Damien Gallagher

CGU & WFI Executive General Manager CX & Growth



As a proud partner of Farm Safe Australia, WFI Insurance is delighted to continue our support of the 'Safer Farms Report'.

We are proud to sponsor the *Safer Farms 2025 Report Second Chances – Who Knows How Many You'll Get*. This theme resonates deeply with WFI, and the clients and agricultural communities we serve, as we directly see the life changing consequences of farming incidents.

As one of Australia's leading rural insurers, we receive a significant number of claims each year relating to incidents on farms. While circumstances vary, there is often a common thread – that many were preventable.

Speed, rushed tasks, fatigue, shortcuts with safety protocols, mishaps with heavy machinery and a lack of training are frequently cited as causes of these accidents.

Pleasingly, WFI's national farm related claims continue to decline, reducing around 8% over the last year and 30% since FY20. Within this portfolio however, we have seen an increase in impact related claims, the highest in 4 years.

Within our liability portfolio, which relates to third party incidents on farms outside of workers compensation, we

have seen a slight increase this year. While the majority of incidents related to animals and livestock, there was a sharp 44% increase in impact related claims. We have also seen a concerning 275% increase in fall related claims since last year, attributed to falls from heights, slips and trips.

In our workers compensation portfolio (WA only), we continue to see a downward trajectory in overall incidents reducing by around 14% from FY24. Beef cattle and sheep farming incidents continue to be the leading claim types.

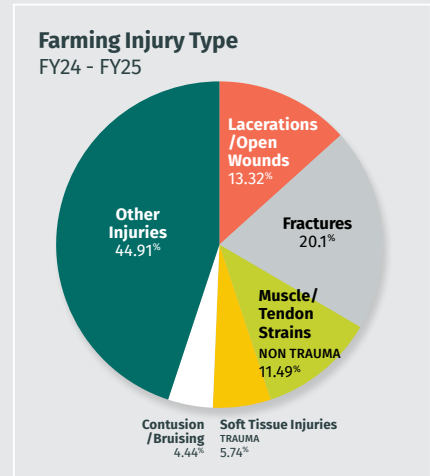
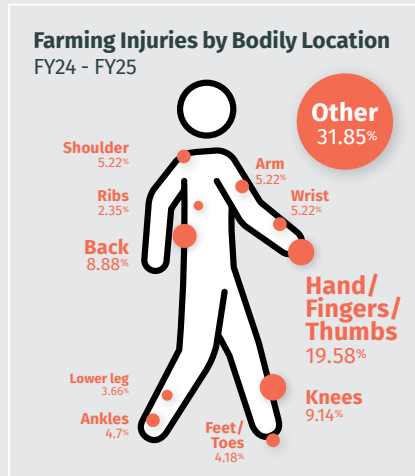
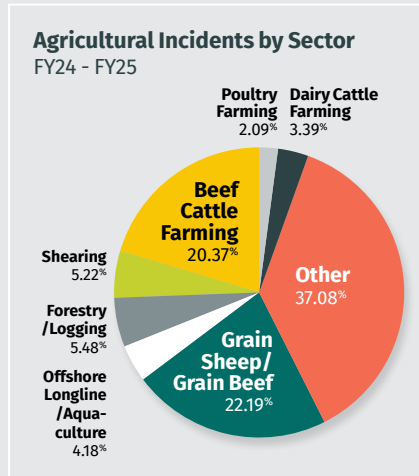
While burn related injuries dramatically reduced over the past year, we have seen an increase in the frequency and severity of crush injuries. Devastatingly, a number of these have resulted in severe impairing injuries, with farm machinery, fencing and beef cattle frequent catalysts.

There were over 1,800 claims relating to farm vehicle collisions, rolls and accidents last year. Vehicle incidents included quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles (SSVs), with a number of these resulting in life altering injuries including neck and spinal fractures, along with brain traumas.

Other farming risks include extreme weather events which continue to increase in frequency and severity, with natural peril related claims increasing 18% over the past three years, along with farm property fires up 28% during the same timeframe.

2025 WFI INSURANCE

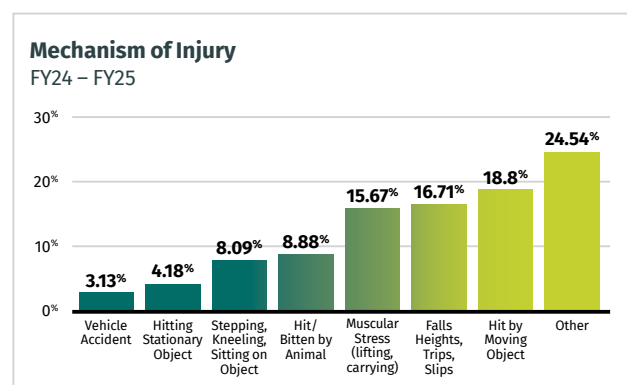
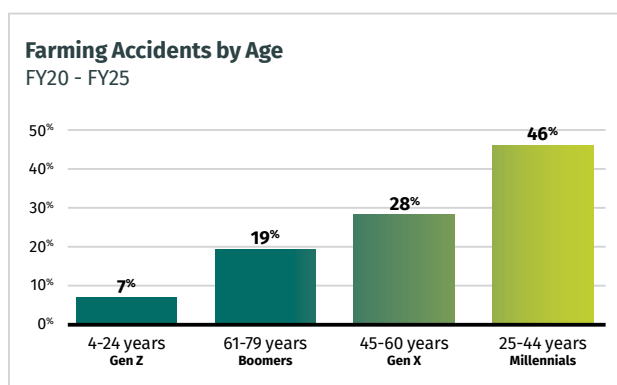
Key Agricultural Insights



The mental health and wellbeing of farmers and their families continues to be a key focus for our business, with WFI joining the National Farmers Federation's call to action for further government investment in this space. Over the past year, we have seen a 75% increase in workers compensation claims relating to anxiety and stress, indicating there is a pressing need for more support.

WFI remains steadfastly committed to improving farm safety. Our local area representatives, who live and work within rural and regional Australia, continue to work closely with their farming clients, walking their farms together to ensure they understand and minimise their site-specific risks.

We know not everyone gets a second chance, and a momentary lapse in concentration can change a life forever. We hope that through sharing our data and insights in this report, we can help raise awareness of incident triggers and types, with the aim of reducing injuries and fatalities on farms.



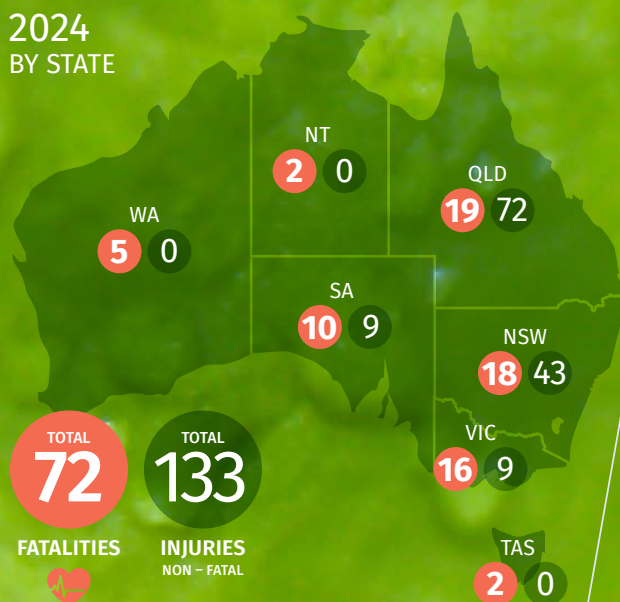
About Damien Gallagher

Damien Gallagher was appointed into the role of CGU & WFI Executive General Manager Customer Experience & Growth in May 2025. Damien was the formerly the Executive General Manager of CGU.

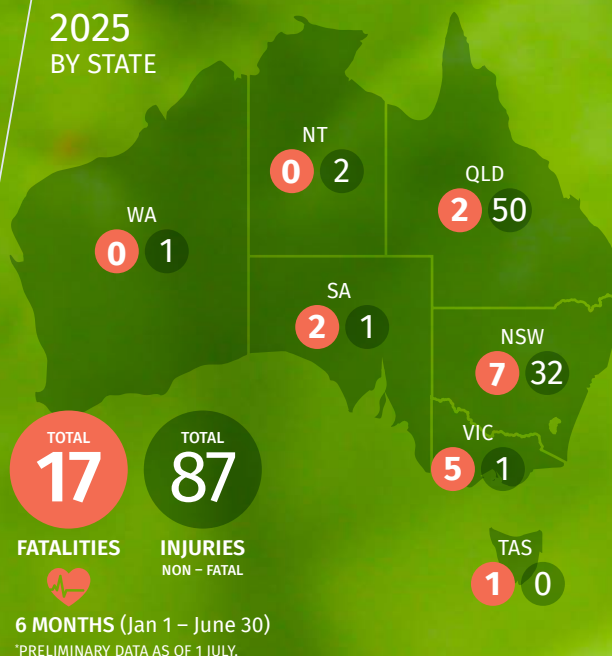
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SNAPSHOT

2024
BY STATE



2025
BY STATE



Behind every number is a name.
Behind every injury, a life changed forever.

A warning we can't ignore and a *Second Chance* we can't waste

In 2023, the agricultural sector recorded its lowest number of on-farm fatalities in recent history: 32 lives lost. While any loss is too many, it felt like a step in the right direction; a hopeful sign that safety messages were cutting through, that culture was shifting. But in 2024, the momentum reversed. Tragically, we saw 72 people die on Australian farms, the highest number of fatalities in two decades.

This sharp rise should be seen for what it is: a serious warning. A year that reveals just how fragile progress can be, and how quickly complacency, pressure, fatigue, or a moment's inattention can turn into tragedy.

Yet even more concerning is what hasn't changed. For more than a decade, the number of severe injuries on Australian farms has remained stubbornly static. Each year, hundreds of people are hospitalised, many with life-altering consequences and the patterns are predictably familiar: machinery incidents, quad bike rollovers, livestock handling, falls from heights. These injuries aren't just statistics. They're livelihoods changed, families impacted, communities stretched.

The consistent injury rate tells us something important: that while safety messages may be heard, they're not always translating into behaviour change. Or, that the systems and structures farmers work within, from limited time, to out-dated equipment, to cultural pressure to 'push through', continue to place them at unacceptable risk.

2025 must be our second chance. A reset. A year to take a hard look not just at what went wrong in 2024, but what isn't working in the bigger picture and to start having more honest conversations about the conditions, expectations and everyday decisions that shape safety on Australian farms.

Reducing deaths is critical, but bringing down the unchanging rate of severe injuries is equally urgent. This means thinking beyond high-visibility campaigns and asking what practical support farmers need to shift everyday behaviour including better planning, better conversations, and less tolerance for the 'near miss' culture that normalises risk.

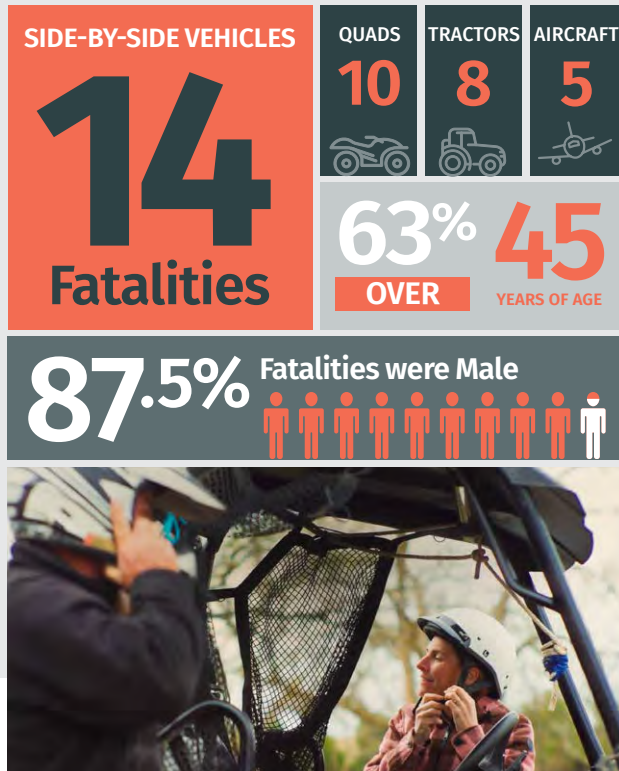
We don't get to choose the warning. But we do get to choose what we do next.

Let's treat 2025 as the second chance it is; to work smarter, lead by example, and make sure this year tells a better story.

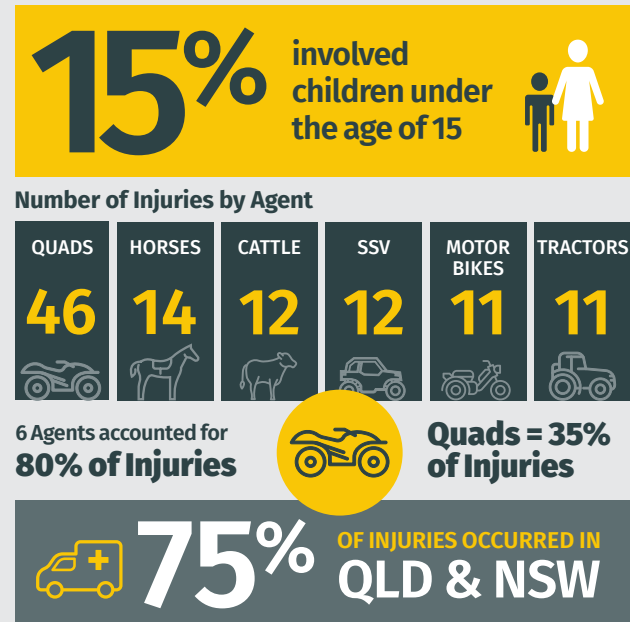
2024 STATISTICS

FATALITIES

Number of Fatalities by Agent



INJURIES



Side-by-Sides Take the Lead

For the first time in Australian farm safety reporting, side-by-side vehicles (SSVs) have overtaken both tractors and quad bikes as the leading cause of on-farm fatalities in a single year. In 2024, more people lost their lives in incidents involving side-by-sides than any other type of machinery or vehicle; a shift that should give all of us pause.

SSVs have long been promoted as a safer alternative to quad bikes, particularly due to their stability, seatbelts, roll-over protection systems (ROPS), and capacity to carry passengers. When used properly, they can indeed reduce risk. But this year's data shows that the presence of safety features alone isn't enough and that the way these vehicles are being used matters just as much as the design itself.

Too often, seatbelts are left unfastened. Helmets aren't worn. Vehicles are overloaded, or operated on steep, unstable terrain without appropriate training or risk assessment. In many of the fatal incidents recorded, these basic safety steps could have made the difference between a near miss and a life lost.

This shift doesn't mean that quads and tractors are no longer a concern. Over the past 25 years, these two machines have

dominated the statistics: quad bikes have been involved in 231 fatalities since 2001, and tractors even more, with 285 lives lost. They remain deeply embedded in farm operations, and their risks, from rollovers to runovers, are well-documented.

But the rise in SSV-related fatalities is a reminder that no machine is inherently safe. Technology and design can only go so far. If safety measures aren't followed, if users aren't trained, or if risks aren't actively assessed, even the best equipment can become deadly.

This moment should be seen as both a warning and an opportunity. A warning that assumptions of safety can breed complacency, and an opportunity to double down on correct use, training, and culture change. It's not enough to switch vehicles; we have to shift behaviours.

As more farms adopt SSVs in place of quads, we must ensure they're being used as intended; with seatbelts worn, helmets on, passengers appropriate to the vehicles capacity, and terrain assessed. Otherwise, we risk repeating history with a different machine.

The tools are only safer if we use them safely. Let's make sure that message hits home before another year of preventable losses passes us by.

2025 NATIONAL **Farm Safety** Week



Second Chances **Why the stories we tell** **could save a life.**

This Campaign is Proudly Supported by



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

The theme of *Second Chances* speaks to something deeply human; the moment you realise just how close things came to going terribly wrong, and the quiet promise you make to do things differently next time.

In agriculture, near misses are common. A vehicle slides, a child wanders, a PTO grabs at loose clothing and somehow, the worst doesn't happen. But too often, those moments are brushed aside. We shake our heads, call it a close call, and get back to the job. What the *Second Chances* campaign asks is: what if we paused instead? What if we took the time to learn from that moment and helped someone else avoid it altogether?

Storytelling is at the heart of farm culture. It's how we pass on wisdom, how we make sense of experience, and how we connect across generations. But for too long, we've relied on quiet anecdotes or dark humour instead of honest reflection. Rules and policies help shape safety systems, but lasting change is often driven by farmer stories.

They're what motivate others to think differently and act, especially when something nearly happens to someone they care about.

Research and experience tell us that the messenger matters. When farmers hear from someone who's walked in their boots, who knows the pressures of shearing, harvest, or moving stock on a deadline, the message cuts through. It's not a lecture. It's a conversation. And those conversations are what create space for change.

Every story in this campaign was generously shared by someone who survived a near miss and wanted others to learn from it. They're not told with shame, but with courage. These are the kinds of stories that stop you in your tracks and make you look at your own habits differently.

Because safety is rarely about not knowing. It's about remembering. And stories help us remember.

If you've had a near miss, you're not alone. You've been given a second chance. The real question is...what will you do with it?



Felicity, Tasmania
Beef Farmer / Industry Advocate /
Farmsafe Australia, Chair



Matt, New South Wales
Rural Contractor

Sharing Near Miss Stories Safely: How to Reflect Without Retraumatizing

In agriculture, near misses are often the stories we don't tell. They're the ones that live in the quiet corners of our minds; the moment we nearly lost a limb, nearly rolled a vehicle, nearly lost someone we love. And while we may laugh them off or bury them under a day's work, these experiences often carry important lessons that could prevent future harm.

That's why sharing near miss stories is so powerful. But it also comes with responsibility.

When shared respectfully, a near miss story can be a catalyst for change. It can spark important conversations, highlight hidden risks, and remind us all to think twice. But when shared carelessly or in too much graphic detail, it can shock, upset, or even re-trigger trauma for others who've experienced similar events.

Whether you're speaking in a workplace toolbox meeting, a community forum, or just around the kitchen table, how you share matters.

Here are five key guidelines for safe storytelling when it comes to near misses:

1. Focus on the lesson, not the drama.

It can be tempting to include all the gory details especially when the incident was intense. But ask yourself: What will people remember most? Too much detail can overwhelm or distract from the point. Instead, zero in on what went wrong, how it could have been worse, and most importantly, what was learned or changed as a result.

2. Be mindful of your audience.

If you're speaking to young workers, people with lived experience of trauma, or an audience unfamiliar with agricultural risk, consider how your story might land. What feels like 'just another day' to you might be deeply confronting to someone else. Adjust your language and tone accordingly, and don't assume everyone shares the same comfort level with risk.

3. If you share a story that isn't about you, either seek permission or keep it anonymous.

Even if it's a powerful example, if it's not your story to tell, don't tell it as if it is. Farm safety is personal, and sharing someone else's experience without their knowledge or consent can cause hurt or embarrassment, and damage trust.

If a story must be shared for learning purposes, anonymise it. Many of these experiences have happened to many farmers and it is easy to keep personal details, and locations out of the conversation without losing the impact of the lesson.

4. Keep it real, but keep it respectful.

You don't have to sugar-coat the story; realness is what makes it powerful. But avoid flippant humour, blame, or overly graphic detail. Be aware that others may be processing their own experiences and your story might hit close to home. Frame your sharing with care and humility, not bravado.

5. Make space for support and follow-up.

If a near miss story brings up strong emotions, don't just move on. Make sure there's space for debriefing or reflection; whether that's a quiet moment afterward, a conversation with a peer, or access to mental health resources. Sharing should never leave people feeling worse. It should open the door to safer thinking and healthier conversations.

Reflection is powerful, when it's done safely.

The goal of sharing near misses isn't to shock. It's to connect. It's to say: "This happened to me. It could've been worse. Here's what I've changed. Maybe it'll help you too."

Stories are how culture shifts. When we hear them, we start to see risks differently. When we tell them, we own our learning. But we must do it with care, for ourselves, and for those listening.

If you're not ready to share publicly, that's okay too. Reflection doesn't always have to be loud. Share privately with your family, your team, or even just write it down for yourself. It's still valuable. It still counts.

And if your experience still feels raw or unresolved, know that help is available. You don't have to process it alone. Sometimes the bravest thing isn't speaking, it's reaching out.

Because every near miss carries a lesson but only if we're able to carry it forward, safely.

SUNDAY
20 JULY

Every Near Miss Has a Lesson

Let's not miss it

A near miss is a warning, a moment where something could have gone terribly wrong but didn't. It's a second chance, and not everyone gets one. That's why it's critical we don't brush these moments off or treat them as 'close calls' with no consequence.

Every near miss has something to teach us. It's an opportunity to ask: *What can we do differently next time? What systems, habits, or behaviours need to change to stop this from becoming a tragedy?* Whether it's a moment of fatigue, a miscommunication, or a missing piece of gear, we owe it to ourselves, and the people we work with, to reflect and respond.

Raising these moments with your team or family on farm shows leadership. It tells people you're paying attention and that safety isn't just a box to tick, it's something you live. The real impact comes not just from noticing a near miss but showing that it leads to change. Fix the fence. Update the process. Talk it out. Put it in writing.

Most importantly, don't take a second chance for granted. Learn from it. Share it. Use it to protect the people who matter most.

5 WAYS TO IMPLEMENT A NEAR MISS REPORTING PROCESS ON FARM

1. Make It Normal to Speak Up

Set the tone by encouraging open conversations. Let your team or family know that near misses aren't a sign of failure, they're a chance to improve.

2. Create a Simple Reporting System

Use a notebook in the ute, a whiteboard in the shed, or a shared notes app. Keep it quick, informal, and accessible. The key is making reporting easy.

3. Talk About Near Misses Regularly

Add them to toolbox talks, team meetings, or family dinners. Discuss what happened, what was learned, and what's been changed as a result.

4. Follow Through with Action

Whether it's changing a procedure, improving equipment, or offering training, show that reporting leads to real outcomes. That builds trust and keeps people engaged.

5. Review and Reflect

Find a timeframe that works for you (monthly, quarterly etc), and review all reported near misses. Look for patterns and use them to shape your safety planning for the months ahead.

Near misses aren't just close calls, they're your clearest clues on how to stop the next incident before it happens.

Second Chances Story.

BY ROB

COTTON FARMER
NEW SOUTH WALES

It was late in the day, nearly knock-off time, and I'd just sat down for dinner. The contractor I was setting up for the night got moving quicker than expected, so I rushed out to help with the setup of the picker. I didn't think twice, just flew out the door and jumped in to fix a door block on the cotton picker.

I'd done it plenty of times before. Probably too many. That year I'd been on the machine nonstop, and I was feeling relaxed, maybe too relaxed, about the whole thing.

My foot caught on a spindle as I was clearing the shoot section. I thought I'd freed myself, so I waved to the contractor to go ahead. He eased the heads into motion.

That's when I realised my foot was still caught. My shoe had hooked on and the spindle started slowly turning with my foot still attached. The heads were only engaged slowly, thankfully, and he shut the machine down the moment I signalled that something wasn't right.

The spindle had started to twist deeper into my foot. We had to cut my boot off and remove the spindle from the column, still stuck in me.

It was a cold night, and I was stuck in the picker for over an hour before we got it sorted.

I went to hospital, got it removed, and was back at work the next day. Lucky, really.

What have I changed since? Footwear is always appropriate now, regardless of how much of a rush I'm in. And everyone's out of the machine until everything's properly cleared and proper communication confirms that. That 'relaxed' approach nearly cost me a lot more than a night off.

That's when I realised my foot was still caught. My shoe had hooked on and the spindle started slowly turning with my foot still attached.



This story clearly resonates with the complacency theme; the idea that repetitive tasks and familiarity with the job can dull our sense of risk. It also touches on communication, proper PPE, and rushing, especially the assumption that it's "just a quick job" or that "I've done this before, it'll be fine." There's a strong safety message about not letting muscle memory replace proper procedure, particularly when working late in the day. Like many near misses, this one likely had several contributing factors but often, one issue feels more obvious than the others. The trick is to slow down and think about all the layers: what else contributed, and what other small failures lined up to let this happen? This is exactly what the Swiss Cheese Model of accident causation illustrates; that incidents aren't caused by a single point of failure, but by multiple weak spots aligning. The more of those 'holes' we can patch, the less likely something will slip through next time.

MONDAY
21 JULY

Dead Tired

The cost of pushing through

In agriculture, there's a powerful pride in getting the job done, no matter what. When the conditions are right, the pressure is on, or the season is short, farmers know how to push through. Sowing. Harvest. Shearing. Picking. They're high-pressure windows where every minute counts and every delay costs. And so, we dig deep. Often too deep.

But fatigue doesn't just slow you down. It clouds your judgement, dulls your reflexes, and makes risk feel normal. You skip the checklist. You take the shortcut. You say yes when you know the safer choice is to say wait.

The truth is, most of us wear fatigue like a badge of honour. We've built a culture where working to exhaustion is expected, where rest can feel like weakness, and asking for help is rare. But fatigue is not a test of character. It's a serious safety risk.

One hard conversation about stopping is always better than one hard conversation after something goes wrong. Because when you're overtired, you're not just risking productivity, you're risking lives.

This isn't about being soft. It's about being smart. Planning for rest, rotating tasks, checking in with your team; those aren't luxuries, they're strategies. You can still work hard without working blind.

Fatigue will always be part of farming. But how we manage it, how we talk about it, plan for it, and prioritise recovery, could be the difference between a job done and a life changed.

RUNNING ON EMPTY ISN'T A BADGE OF HONOUR

The biggest misconception about fatigue is that pushing through makes you tougher. In reality, it makes you more vulnerable; to mistakes, to injury, and to putting others at risk. Working tired doesn't mean you're hardworking, it means your body and brain are compromised. We've normalised exhaustion in farming, but fatigue isn't just part of the job, it's a hazard. The bravest thing you can do isn't to keep going, it's to call time when you need it. Because getting the job done means getting home safe, and you can't do that if fatigue is making the decisions.

STRATEGIES

1. Schedule breaks like you schedule jobs

Build rest into your day *before* you hit the wall. Even short breaks can reset your focus, reduce physical strain, and help prevent avoidable mistakes.

2. Normalise balance, not burnout

Working long hours may feel like part of the culture, but it shouldn't be a badge of honour. Set realistic workloads, rotate high-risk tasks, and call it early when you're running on empty.

3. Watch for warning signs of cumulative fatigue in others (and yourself)

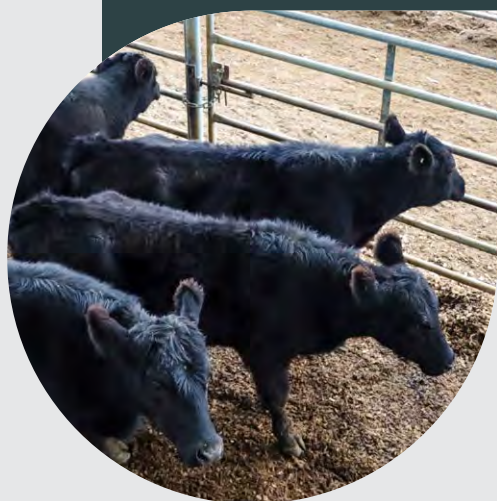
Fatigue isn't just about last night's sleep, it's about how much recovery you've had over time. Slurred speech, clumsiness, zoning out... they're not just signs of a rough day. They're red flags. Build in proper rest days and monitor for long-term exhaustion, especially during peak periods like harvest or shearing.

Have an honest conversation with your team about fatigue. What are the signs? What's the plan when someone's not 100%? Don't let 'pushing through' be the default. Don't wait for a near miss to change the way you work.

Second Chances Story.

BY JACK

STOCK CONTRACTOR
VICTORIA



...three of them jammed in the gateway, pressing back hard and pinning Jack into a corner. He went down fast.

Jack is a livestock contractor from Victoria, with years of experience under his belt and work that's taken him across New South Wales and South Australia. Like many in agriculture, he's used to long days, tough stock, and pushing through to get the job done. But one near miss during a routine pre-calving drench and vaccination job reminded him that experience doesn't make you invincible and that timing and fatigue can be a dangerous mix.

He and two of his team were handling about 300 head of cattle at a property two hours from home. It had been a long, solid day of work. The team was tired but on the home stretch, they were down to the last pen, letting out cattle in groups. Jack stepped in to open the gate and do a final count, but before he could get the numbers, the exit gate opened.

What came next was a wall of cattle, all of them eager to get out.

In the rush, three of them jammed in the gateway, pressing back hard and pinning Jack into a corner. He went down fast. At first, he thought he'd pulled a groin muscle. In reality, he'd fractured his hip in five places.

Still, he finished the job, or at least, watched the rest of it get done, leaning against the car, trying to stay upright. Then, remarkably, he drove himself the two hours back home.

It wasn't until he arrived and tried to get out of the vehicle that he realised something was very wrong. His wife had to help him inside using a shovel for balance. A visiting wool broker, who also happened to be a local footy trainer, saw the signs straight away and convinced Jack to get to hospital. That advice likely saved him from further complications.

Looking back, Jack sees the contributing factors clearly. The long day. The long drive. The creeping complacency that can set in at the end of a job. The lack of physical infrastructure, like a hoop over the gate to keep it shut. And most of all, the fatigue.

Now, Jack works differently. He takes on jobs closer to home. He's more deliberate, more focused on quality over speed. If he can, he works one-on-one with farmers, so expectations around pace and care are clear. He prioritises animal welfare and follows best practice standards, no matter how routine the task may seem.

"It's a lot slower and a lot more gentle pace," he says now.

Because near misses like this one aren't just close calls, they're chances to reset before something worse happens. And Jack's taking that chance seriously.



TUESDAY
22 JULY

Familiarity Can Be Fatal

Don't let 'I've done it 1000 times' be the last time

Complacency is one of the most dangerous and least visible risks in agriculture. It doesn't always look like recklessness. More often, it shows up as routine. It's when you've done something a thousand times before and assume this time will be no different. It's when you're busy, tired, or juggling too many things, and safety becomes something you mean to get to later.

Many people working on farms today have grown up on them; learning by watching, by helping out, by absorbing things along the way. That experience is valuable, but it's not the same as proper training. Respectfully, just because you've seen or done a task for years doesn't mean it's being done the safest way. And over time, our bodies, reflexes, and memory change, especially as we age. The task you could do easily ten years ago may carry very different risks today.

Complacency can creep in when we stop questioning what we're doing and how we're doing it. It's rarely intentional. Often, it's just a matter of priorities and on farms, the urgent always competes with the important.

But no matter how experienced you are, no matter how familiar the job feels, safety must remain a conscious choice. A few seconds of extra attention, a quick check-in with your team, or a decision to pause instead of push through can make all the difference.

On farms, complacency is quiet but its consequences can be loud and lasting.

RESPECT THE ROUTINE. CHALLENGE THE HABIT.

Complacency doesn't always look like carelessness. Sometimes it looks like confidence. When you've done a task a hundred times, it's easy to assume nothing will go wrong. But that's when we stop seeing the risks. We skip checks. We cut corners. We forget to ask, "What's different today?" Respecting the routine means taking those few extra seconds to pause, plan, and protect yourself and others. Challenging the habit means being open to better, safer ways; even for the jobs that feel second nature. Because the moment something feels too familiar is often when we need to look closer.

STRATEGIES

1. Treat routine jobs with respect

It doesn't matter how many times you've done it, every job deserves a moment to pause and check: "Is anything different today? Is there a safer way?"

2. Switch it up with a buddy review

Pair up or rotate who does what. A fresh can spot hazards you've become blind to. Invite someone who doesn't normally do the task to walk through the process with you, you'd be surprised what they might see that you don't.

3. Never skip the checklist

Whether it's machinery, pre-start routines, or PPE, treat every time like it's new.

This week, challenge one routine.

Ask yourself or your team: "Is there a safer way we could be doing this?"

Second Chances Story.

BY BEN

SHEEP FARMER
TASMANIA

It happened while I was moving a mob of ewes, a job I've done countless times. I was in the side-by-side, not going fast (maybe 15 km/h), just enough pace to keep the mob moving. A few sheep had broken away, and the dogs had gone to gather them. I glanced back to see how they were going and it was just a quick look over the shoulder.

That's when the front of the vehicle slammed into a tree stump, completely hidden by silver tussock grass. The impact jolted me forward hard enough to smack my head against the rollover bar. Skinned my scalp and left me with a pounding headache.

My first thought?

"Ouch... that was stupid."

And then: "I'm really glad I wasn't going any faster."

It could have been a lot worse. If I'd hit the stump at higher speed or been unbalanced when it happened, I might've been thrown out or knocked unconscious.

Looking back, it was a simple mistake. I took my eyes off where I was going. If I'd stopped the vehicle before checking behind me, none of it would've happened.

Since then, I've changed a few things. I keep my focus forward while driving. The dogs can wait those few seconds. I wear a seatbelt and a helmet in the side-by-side now, and anyone who's been in and out of a buggy all day knows that's not always practical, but it's better than a busted head.

This near miss shook me up.

And yes, it did hurt. Probably didn't help that I haven't got much hair left to hide the damage.



If I'd hit the stump at higher speed or been unbalanced when it happened, I might've been thrown out or knocked unconscious.



WEDNESDAY
23 JULY

The Near Miss You Can't See Coming

Mental Health Matters

Not all near misses happen with machinery. Sometimes, the danger builds slowly; in your head, in your body, in the way you stop sleeping, start snapping, or lose interest in the things that used to matter. That's what burnout looks like. And on farms, it's more common than we like to admit.

Burnout doesn't arrive all at once. It creeps in after long days, relentless seasons, mounting debt, and the pressure to be across everything; livestock, weather, family, markets, staff, machinery. Farming doesn't clock off at 5pm. When the work piles up, rest can feel like a luxury you can't afford.

But burnout is a near miss. It's your warning light. If left unchecked, it can spiral into serious mental ill health, strained relationships, and decisions made in a fog of exhaustion. That's why it's critical to notice it and do something about it.

Check in on yourself and your mates. Are you losing patience? Forgetting things? Running on caffeine and autopilot? That's not toughness, that's survival mode. And it's not sustainable.

Mental health might not leave a visible scar, but it's just as important as physical safety. Start small, take breaks when you can, eat proper meals, talk to someone you trust. And if you feel like you're getting close to the edge, don't wait. Reach out. Burnout is a warning. Let's not ignore it.

YOU CAN'T OUTWORK BURNOUT

Support doesn't always look the same for everyone and that's okay. Sometimes it's a quiet chat with a mate over the ute tray or checking in with a neighbour who's been there too. It might be talking to family, visiting your GP, or calling services like Lifeline or Beyond Blue for a bit of guidance. For some, it's finding real value in speaking with a counsellor or therapist. Whether it's peer support or professional help, what matters most is not bottling things up. Reaching out isn't weakness; it's one of the strongest things you can do.

STRATEGIES

1. Check in with yourself regularly

Ask yourself: Am I tired? Distracted? Carrying too much stress? Mental strain is just as real as physical strain.

2. Start conversations that cut through

Ask questions and wait for the answer. A culture where people feel safe to speak and believe they are being heard is one of the strongest forms of safety. You don't have to fix it, just start the conversation.

3. Don't wait until it boils over

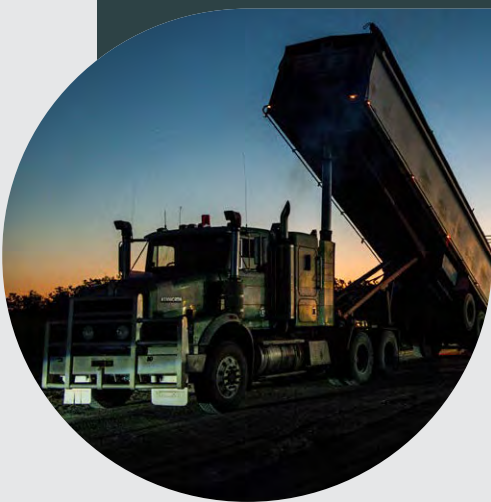
If you find yourself wondering if you are ok, reach out early. Talk to a mate. Call a service. You are not alone and the people around you will help you find the right support for you.

What can you do for others? Take a moment to check in and ask how things are really going. You don't have to fix it, just start the conversation. It could be the one that makes a difference.

Second Chances Story.

BY LEILA

CEREAL & LIVESTOCK FARMER
VICTORIA



As he raised the tipper on the truck, it struck overhead powerlines.



Like many farming families, we're used to long hours and tight margins, especially during the peak seasons.

It was late one night and the weather was turning, and like most farmers facing a narrow window, my husband was trying to squeeze every hour of productivity out of the day. I was heavily pregnant at the time and wasn't able to help as much as usual, which meant he was carrying the load mostly on his own.

Around 11.30pm, a load of urea needed to be unloaded. It was dark, my husband was tired, and he just wanted to get the job done. As he raised the tipper on the truck, it struck overhead powerlines.

The consequences were immediate and serious. The tyres blew out from the charge. A fire broke out. The entire district lost power.

By sheer luck, or miracle, no one was hurt. My husband and the truck driver walked away.

He was really shaken. He drives under that line every day. He just didn't see it. He wasn't thinking clearly and it was just one of those moments that happens when you're completely burnt out.

At the time, he'd been running on very little sleep every night for weeks. Getting in past midnight, up again at four or five. He was rushing. Making small mistakes, but one of those mistakes wasn't small.

It was a confronting wake-up call. Not just because of how close it was, but because we were expecting a child. He said to me later, 'What if I died before I even met my kid?' That's something that really stuck.

Since then, things have changed.

We talk more about stress and mental load. He's stepped away from the 'race' and stopped comparing himself to neighbours with more gear, more workers, faster turnarounds. Our operation is different, and that's okay.

He's also prioritised rest, even if he needs the occasional nudge. And importantly, he's made space for sport again, local footy training, a few hours a week where his mind can switch off from the farm. That's his outlet. For a couple of hours, he just gets to chase the red ball around and not think about anything else. Everyone needs something like that.

Burnout doesn't always look dramatic. Sometimes it builds quietly in the background, a slow erosion of good judgment, a shortcut here, a missed step there. But this incident reminded both us that it only takes one mistake for everything to change. And that no deadline, no rush is worth more than making it home safely.

THURSDAY
24 JULY

Between Naps and Knockoff

When kids, care and work collide

Farming is a lifestyle built around family. For many, raising kids on the land isn't just practical, it's part of the dream. Children who grow up on farms often have incredible childhoods: they learn responsibility early, fall in love with animals and the natural world, and come to understand life, and death, in a way that builds depth and resilience.

But while the lifestyle is rich, it comes with real challenges, especially when it comes to keeping kids safe. Access to reliable childcare in rural and remote areas is often limited or non-existent. That means children are frequently present in workspaces out of necessity, not by choice. The juggle is constant: "Can I do this job safely with my child nearby?" "Who's watching them while I move the mob?" "Can this wait until I have help to watch the kids?"

This is where safe play areas, active supervision, and child-appropriate tasks become essential tools, not just 'nice-to-haves'. Clear boundaries around where children can be, especially during high-risk work, help protect them while still allowing them to be part of farm life. Giving them meaningful, age-appropriate roles helps them feel involved, without placing them in harm's way.

Child safety on farms isn't about keeping kids away from the action, it's about creating spaces and systems where they can be involved safely. Because when farms are safe for kids, they're better for everyone. And the childhood memories they make on the land should be full of learning, not near misses.

BEING NEARBY ISN'T THE SAME AS WATCHING

Our children are always our number one priority, but farm life can blur the lines between work and parenting. In the rush of the day, it's easy to think, 'It'll only take a second'. But on farms, everything can change in a second. One moment of inattention, one job taken on without a plan for supervision, can lead to tragedy. That's why setting up safe zones, having backup plans, and talking openly with your family or team isn't overkill; it's care in action. Because no task, no deadline, is ever worth more than your child's safety.

STRATEGIES

1. Make safe zones, not just safe bets

If kids are on site, set up clearly defined no-go zones, safe play areas, and always know who's responsible for actively supervising them.

2. Have a backup plan even for 'Just a minute'

Need to jump on a machine or move stock? Even if it's quick, make sure someone's got the kids covered. Most near misses happen during 'just for a sec' moments.

3. Buddy up with other families or workers

Sharing the load through informal care arrangements with neighbours or extended family might work for your family and give you the opportunity to support others in the same situation.

Sit down with your family or team and talk about any near misses you've had with your children on farm. What's working? What's not? You're not alone and your near miss story might help someone else make a safer call.

Second Chances Story.

BY VANESSA

MIXED LIVESTOCK FARMER
TASMANIA



I couldn't reach her without spooking the mob, which could have made it all so much worse. All I could do was freeze, back the pressure off and yell.

It happened in the yards. We were running cattle through the crush and I was behind the next group, pushing them up, while my partner was at the head bale getting tags ready. It was all pretty routine. We've done it a hundred times.

Then I saw her.

Our 2.5-year-old daughter was standing dead-centre in the crush. She'd climbed through the bars and was directly in the path of the oncoming cattle.

My stomach dropped. I couldn't reach her without spooking the mob, which could have made it all so much worse. All I could do was freeze, back the pressure off and yell.

My partner jumped the rails in one go and grabbed her by the arm, yanking her out just in time. She was crying, shocked, with a sore arm. But she was okay.

That moment is seared into my memory. I felt utterly powerless. Terrified. One slip, one second too late, and it could've ended very differently.

Looking back, we'd gotten too comfortable. She was always around the yards. We'd taught her not to go into pens with stock, but the crush had been empty. We assumed she knew better. Worse, we each assumed the other was watching her.

Now, everything's different. We built her a little viewing platform, it's her safe spot, and it's non-negotiable. Before we start moving cattle, we call out and she answers so we know she's in place.

She's not just off to the side, she's part of the safety system.

As she's gotten older, we've given her little jobs: fetching tags, calling out colours. But when animals move, she's up on that platform. Every time.

This changed how we work, not just with our daughter, but with each other. We talk more, we plan better, we've stopped assuming.

Because a few seconds of inattention almost cost us everything. And that's not a mistake we'll make twice.



FRIDAY
25 JULY

Silence Isn't Safe

Why every job deserves a conversation

Farming is full of jobs that are done alone but that doesn't mean they should be done in silence.

When we don't talk about what we're doing, where we're going, what feels off or who's nearby, we leave room for confusion, delay and disaster. And yet on many farms, silence has become part of the routine. It's not intentional, it's just that things get busy, devices go flat, plans change, and everyone assumes someone else knows what's going on.

But silence isn't safe.

Many near misses happen when communication breaks down. A team member heads to a paddock without telling anyone. A station-hand radios in a problem, but no one hears it. A casual doesn't speak up about a machine that doesn't feel right. Too often, people don't ask questions because they don't want to be seen as slowing things down.

We have to shift that culture.

Every job, no matter how small or routine, deserves a conversation. Where are you going? Who knows you're there? When will you be back? What's the plan if something goes wrong?

Simple steps like daily check-ins, shared calendars, emergency plans and working radios aren't complicated but they are powerful. Because when people feel empowered to speak up and expected to check in, they make better decisions.

On farms, communication isn't a luxury. It's a lifeline.

Say something. Ask something. Keep the conversations flowing.

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

In remote and rugged farming country, the right communication tools can mean the difference between a quick response and a tragic outcome. Safety apps, personal locator beacons (PLBs), WhatsApp groups and shared calendars are simple tools that keep people connected and traceable. If someone doesn't check in, others know where to start looking, fast. Without these aids, search and rescue can quickly turn into search and recovery. It's not about overcomplicating things, it's about building habits that save lives. Because no one should go missing without someone knowing where they were headed, or when they were due back.

STRATEGIES

1. Start every job with a quick check-in

Ask: "What's the plan?" "What's changed?" "Anything we need to look out for?" "Do we have charged up communication devices?" It takes 30 seconds and it keeps everyone on the same page.

2. Speak up even if it feels awkward or ridiculous

If something doesn't look right or feel safe, say it. Speaking up can feel uncomfortable, especially with family or bosses, but silence protects no one.

3. Build a culture where questions are welcome

Encourage everyone, from the youngest worker to the most experienced, to ask questions, raise concerns and talk things through.

Pick one everyday task this week and talk it through even if you've done it a thousand times. Asking "What's the risk?" before you start shows leadership and gives others permission to do the same. Let's normalise speaking up before things go wrong.

Second Chances Story.

BY STEVI

LIVESTOCK FARMER
NEW SOUTH WALES



I'd been so determined to be helpful that I didn't pause to make sure I actually understood the job properly.



When I first moved to Australia, I had worked cattle but never sheep before and I was keen to learn. My husband was heading off-farm for a training day, and we had a mob that needed drenching. Wanting to be useful, I offered to do it on my own. I'd helped drench merino ewes with him before, and I'd just started working my own dogs. I figured I'd be fine. He was grateful for the help, and I felt good being able to take something off his plate.

Once they left, I brought the composite ewes into the yards and started drenching the same way we had done with the merinos. I walked into the race, drench gun in hand, and got to work. But it didn't take long to realise something was off. The ewes were bigger, stronger, and much more physical than I was expecting. As I moved through the race, they knocked into me, hard and fast. It felt like being in a footy tackling drill on repeat. My arms and ribs took hit after hit.

I was trying to work the dogs, keep the race flowing, and drench all at once. But I was struggling. Still, I pushed on. I didn't want to look weak or make a fuss. I told myself I'd just finish the job.

By the time my husband got back, I was in tears; sore, bruised, and absolutely wrecked. He looked at me, confused. "Why are you in the race?" he asked.

I just stared at him, unsure how to explain. I thought that's how we did it. He gently explained: "You pack the race tight with the dogs, then walk along the outside and drench over the rails." For merinos, who are smaller and tend to duck their heads, he'd sometimes walk through them himself, something he could manage given his size and experience. But with composites, it was a different story. It hadn't even occurred to him to explain it and I hadn't thought to ask.

That day left me covered in bruises, physically sore and pretty angry with myself. The truth is though, it could have been a lot worse. I was lucky I didn't have broken ribs or get knocked down with no one around. I'd been so determined to be helpful that I didn't pause to make sure I actually understood the job properly. I'd assumed it would be the same as before and my husband had assumed I knew more than I did. Neither of us had checked in.

What I learned from that near miss is simple: don't be afraid to ask. Now, any time I take on a job I haven't done before, or even something I've done once or twice, I always ask, "Is there anything I might not know about this task?"

It's not about being inexperienced. It's about being thorough. The best way I can be helpful now is to make sure I'm safe, confident, and clear before I start.

Sometimes the most dangerous thing on the job isn't the usual risk, it's what we don't know we don't know.

**SATURDAY
26 JULY**

The Clock is Ticking

When pressure replaces planning

In agriculture, pressure is part of the job; weather windows, labour shortages, market deadlines, and razor-thin margins all create a constant sense of urgency. But when pressure begins to replace planning, the risk of near misses multiplies.

During high-pressure seasons like sowing, harvest, shearing, or picking and packing, the tempo of work can be relentless. Days blur into nights, breaks are skipped, short-cuts start to look like efficiencies, and safety protocols are quietly pushed aside. It's not that people stop caring, it's that the pressure takes over.

That's often when near misses happen. A fatigued worker forgets to chock a vehicle. A machine isn't properly shut down between shifts. Communication breaks down in the rush to get more done. And the "she'll be right" culture creeps in, even when something feels off.

Often, we get lucky and the mistake doesn't end in tragedy. But luck isn't a strategy and we need to stop relying on it.

Planning doesn't eliminate pressure, but it helps manage it. Pre-season checks, clear crew roles, realistic scheduling, and even just five-minute toolbox talks each day can create a buffer against the chaos.

Because in farming, there will always be things we can't control but pressure doesn't have to be one of them. Slow down just enough to plan ahead, and we give ourselves a better chance at making it home safe, every time.

SAYING 'SHE'LL BE RIGHT' WON'T STOP IT GOING WRONG

When you're under the pump, whether it's a big job or racing to make it to a family event, the pressure to move fast can cloud your judgment. But the most important thing to remember is this: time spent planning is never wasted. A few minutes to walk through risks, roles, and the process can prevent hours of clean-up, recovery, or regret. Don't let urgency override safety; that hard conversation now might save a much harder one later. When the clock is ticking, slow yourself down. Think, talk, and take five. It might just save a life.

STRATEGIES

1. Make time for the plan not just the job

A few minutes to walk through the risks, roles and process can save hours of lost time, or worse, if something goes wrong. Planning is never a waste of time.

2. Don't let deadlines drown out danger

When you're racing the clock, it's tempting to cut corners or say yes when you know it's not quite safe. Back yourself to pause. One hard conversation beats one hard phone call later.

3. Slow down when you're rushing

Rushing is the fast-track to complacency. When time is tight, we cut corners on the jobs we think we know. That's exactly when something usually goes wrong. Slowing down actually saves time in the long run.

Build in time for safety even when you're under pressure. Next time you're facing a rushed job, call a quick huddle. Talk through what could go wrong.

Second Chances Story.

BY CHRIS

HORTICULTURE
NEW SOUTH WALES



In a blink, the fabric tore from my ankle to my hip and wrapped itself around the shaft spinning at 540 rpm.



I got up early one Saturday morning in September 2004 to put out a load of spray with a tow-behind spray cart before heading to the golf course. The week before, the PTO shaft had failed, and I replaced it with another but this one didn't have any protective guards.

When I tried fitting it, I discovered the PTO locking mechanism that attaches to the tractor had also failed and fallen apart. But since both the tractor PTO and the shaft had holes through them, I put a bolt through both to secure it. I couldn't find the right-sized bolt, so I used one that stuck out about 25mm. Although not ideal, it seemed to do the job.

With the PTO spinning away, agitating the chemical mix in the tank, I was filling the spray cart with water. The back window of the tractor was open, and I noticed that the three-point linkage was set incorrectly. It seemed easier to reach through the back window than climb into the cab, so I stepped onto the linkage arm and leaned in to adjust the lever.

That's when the exposed bolt on the spinning PTO caught the leg of my overalls. In a blink, the fabric tore from my ankle to my hip and wrapped itself around the shaft spinning at 540 rpm. Luckily, only the overalls were caught, not the jeans I had on underneath. I stood there stunned, heart racing, thinking about how close I'd just come to disaster.

The overalls were old and worn, already fraying. I remember thinking immediately afterwards:

1. I'd been meaning to replace the PTO shaft with a properly shielded one but hadn't gotten around to it. As a young farmer with a mortgage, a wife, and two small kids, I was trying to save money. Dumb.
2. If the worst had happened, it would've been my wife or kids who found me. I was working just out the front of our home. The trauma they would have carried doesn't bear thinking about.

That incident shook me. I didn't spray that day. I waited until I had replaced the PTO with a new, shielded one. And my golf game was ruined because I spent the whole day thinking about what nearly happened.

At the time, I had this belief that if something went wrong on the farm, I'd wear it. That it was just my risk to carry. But that wasn't true. My wife and kids were part of this life too, and I owed it to them to do better. Risking my life to save a few dollars or avoid a bit of hassle was a poor trade-off.

That lesson has stayed with me. Now I have two full-time employees and up to 13 casuals during peak season. Putting anyone, staff or family, at risk to save money or time is unacceptable on every level.

**I was lucky.
Many others aren't.**

Second Chances Story.

BY ALICE

AGRICULTURAL
PHOTOGRAPHER
QUEENSLAND



...it barreled into me and knocked me backwards. There was an audible crack when I hit the ground.

A few years back, I was on a sheep property during shearing. Alongside the shearers, a stock agent was weighing merino wethers to truck out. I was in the yards with them, snapping shots and getting footage of the action. To stay out of the way, I stepped into a side yard, one that branched off from the race. I knew the gate behind me was open, but I didn't think much of it. I figured I was fine, I'd been in yards a hundred times before.

Then came the moment that changed everything. A crossbred wether got pulled out of the mob, so the agent shoved it through the gate into the adjoining yard. That happened to be the one connected to where I was standing. Even though I knew the gate was open between us, I didn't think I needed to close it. I just assumed the wether would run down to the far end toward the other sheep. It didn't. Instead, it ran straight up the fence line and launched at me, full force. I lifted my arms to try and wave it away, but it barreled into me and knocked me backwards. There was an audible crack when I hit the ground. Everyone heard it. I knew immediately I'd broken something.

The pain was sharp and I grabbed my ankle. I couldn't even lift myself up. I was carted off to hospital and ended up needing multiple surgeries. My leg was broken in several places and my ankle was shattered. I was off work for four months.

The hardest part? It was so avoidable. No one told me to shut the gate, but I also didn't need anyone to. I saw that it was open. I knew the yard layout. But I was focused on the creative, getting the perfect shot, and I got complacent. I assumed the sheep would behave predictably. I assumed I'd be fine.

I've grown up around livestock and yards. That familiarity bred a bit too much confidence. I didn't feel unsafe at the time, but I also wasn't thinking about safety. I was just focussed on the job. That's the thing with complacency, it creeps in quietly. You stop doing the little checks. You assume things will go as they always have. And then, in an instant, they don't.

Now, I work differently. If I need to be in a yard, I make sure that I have a yard that is enclosed and separate from the livestock. Or better yet, I shoot from outside or use the drone. I set myself up so I can focus fully on the creative without needing to keep one eye on my own safety. I speak up more, too, not just expecting others to notice where I am, but making sure they know.

Because the truth is, I should have known better, and I did. But I didn't act on that. That's complacency. And it cost me months of work, a lot of pain, and a hard lesson in how fast things can go wrong, even when they feel routine.

This incident highlights how multiple factors can align to create risk, with complacency being the most significant.

Familiarity with yards and livestock led to assumptions about animal behaviour, and the open gate was a known risk that went unaddressed. Fatigue or distraction from focusing on the creative task at hand reduced situational awareness, and while communication wasn't absent, there was no active check-in about who or what might enter the yard. It's a clear example of how routine, familiarity, and subtle lapses can stack together; a real-world reflection of the Swiss Cheese Model of incident causation!

LEARNING FROM THE *Close Calls*



No one sets out to have a near miss. But on farms, where weather doesn't wait, animals don't pause, and the work never truly ends, they happen. In the rush, the routine, or the quiet pressure we place on ourselves to keep going, things slip. We make judgment calls that don't pan out. We cut corners just to get through the day. And sometimes, we're lucky. We walk away. But a near miss should never just be a lucky break. It's a moment to learn, to reset, and to act.

The stories shared throughout this campaign are not just cautionary tales, they're generous insights from people who've lived through something frightening or humbling, and have chosen to speak up. What links them isn't just the close call, but the reflection that followed: the "why did that happen?" and "what do I do differently next time?"

On farms, there's no shortage of experience. What we often lack is the space to stop and talk about it. These near misses offer that space, a prompt to bring risk into the open and to look at safety as something dynamic and shared, not just a set of rules in a folder.

The stories are varied, a lack of communication and training, fatigue, machinery, livestock, powerlines; but the lesson is consistent: no task is worth doing if it risks the people doing it. And the smallest habit change can be the thing that makes all the difference.

Importantly, we need to recognise that safety isn't just about individual responsibility, it's about systems, culture, and leadership. It's about knowing when to pause, when to ask

questions, and when to say, "this could be done a better way." When we start thinking like that, we shift from reacting to preventing. From hoping to planning.

There's no formula for avoiding every incident. We are human and mistakes do happen. But we can get better at listening to the quiet warnings: the gut feeling, the fence that saved the ute, the moment you catch yourself rushing. Those signals are valuable, and they're often the difference between a story told over a cuppa, and one no one wants to have to tell at all.

Near misses are uncomfortable to reflect on. But that discomfort is what makes them powerful. They offer a safe window into what might have happened, without the devastation. And if we take them seriously, really pay attention to what they reveal, they give us the best possible chance to stop something worse.

We know that every region, every commodity, every family has its own pressures and challenges. But what unites us is our ability to learn from each other, to share the load, and to put safety at the centre, not just after an incident, but every day.

Not all near misses require a formal report, but serious incidents may need to be notified under your state's health and safety laws. It's worth understanding those requirements and making sure your team is aware of their responsibilities.

So, if you've had a near miss, tell someone. If your team's had one, talk about it. And if you've learned something that could help someone else, share it. Because safety isn't a job we do alone. It's built, story by story, from the lessons we've lived, and the changes we've made to do things better.



ONE BITE AT A TIME *Tackling Farm Safety*

BY FELICITY RICHARDS
CHAIR OF FARMSAFE AUSTRALIA



Figuring out how to tackle farm safety can be incredibly difficult. And even though I'm the Chair of Farmsafe Australia, it's taken my husband and me a few years to figure out how we could truly embed the kind of culture I talk about at a national level, on our own farm.

For a long time, I felt like I was the one constantly pushing the safety message, and to be honest, I was starting to feel a bit resentful. We'd have conversations, but they didn't always go anywhere. We'd do ad hoc toolbox talks and tackle individual safety issues, but nothing ever felt like it was part of a broader culture of safety. It was too piecemeal to be meaningful. Eventually, we decided to bring someone else in. That decision turned out to be a real turning point.

We engaged Phillip John from Tasmania, who was a former WorkSafe inspector with very strong rural ties who now works independently with farmers. Phil's experience was invaluable, not just for his technical knowledge, but because he shifted the dynamic. It took the burden off me and turned safety into a shared responsibility across our whole team.

We have a small crew: two permanent staff, three casuals, plus the two of us. Our team ranges in age from 17 to 70, and we work across three locations in northern Tasmania, including Flinders Island, so we're dealing with different skills, levels of experience, and logistics.

Phil started by sitting down with Mark and me to get a good sense of the business and where the biggest risks might be. From there, he created a farm safety manual tailored to our needs; short, focused, and practical.



He then ran a full re-induction for all of us, including Mark and me. That process gave us a shared understanding of expectations and, importantly, documentation that we'd been missing until then.

Next, we asked Phil to conduct a mock audit, a walk-through of the farm as if he were still a WorkSafe inspector. He did it with staff, not with us, which gave our team the opportunity to speak openly and have candid conversations about what was really going on for them, and what their concerns might be.

Rather than coming back with a daunting list of 'corrective actions', Phil called it a list of 'opportunities'. Together, we prioritised the items, created a risk register, assigned responsibilities, and put timeframes in place. He'll now come back every six months to help us stay on track, monitor for new issues, and check in with staff.

One thing I've always worried about, and I know this is common on smaller farms, is what happens when a staff member has an issue but their only options are to raise it with one of us. And we're married. That could be awkward. Phil has become a trusted third party: someone staff can talk to confidentially, who can help broker conversations they might not feel comfortable raising face to face. That's been a big relief for me, and hopefully a comfort to our team as well.

My overall message is this: farm safety can feel overwhelming, but with the right support, it's absolutely doable. Like eating an elephant, one bite at a time. The key is to be realistic, prioritise, stay accountable, and bring your team along for the ride. It doesn't have to be complicated to make a meaningful difference.

Phillip John

A Lifetime of Service to Farm Safety in Tasmania

Phillip John has dedicated his career to making farms safer, not through red tape, but through common sense, community connection, and care. Raised in South Riana, Phill understands firsthand the realities of farming life and the challenges rural businesses face in keeping people safe.

Over three decades, Phill has played a pivotal role in shaping Tasmania's approach to farm safety. As a former senior inspector with Workplace Standards Tasmania, he investigated serious farm incidents and helped guide reform. Later, he created and led the Safe Farming Tasmania Program, a nationally recognised, farmer-first initiative that continues to support and educate rural communities.

Phill's practical, plain-speaking style earned him the trust of farmers across Tasmania and beyond. Although Phill only works with a handful of farmers these days, his influence is deeply embedded in the systems, tools and conversations that help keep agricultural workers safe every day.

**His legacy is simple:
sensible, respectful safety;
the kind that sticks.**



GROWING SENSIBLE SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

A Toolkit for Farmer Fatigue



Fatigue is an inevitable part doing business for most agricultural operations. For many, long hours, night shifts, early starts, seasonal peaks and limited time off are all part of the job. These demands, combined with the unique challenges of farming such as isolation and periods of high physical and mental work interspersed with monotonous tasks all contribute significantly to fatigue in the sector.



The effects of fatigue on mental and physical performance are well known. It impairs decision-making, slows reaction times, reduces concentration and situational awareness as well as affecting hand-eye coordination, mood, communication and teamwork. Over time, chronic fatigue can also lead to serious health issues.

Importantly, when fatigue isn't properly managed, the risks rise, leading to more errors, incidents, injuries and lower productivity.

Although resources for managing fatigue do exist, many aren't well suited for farming. They tend to be either too generic or designed for industries like transport and mining, which follow different work patterns. That's where the *Farming and Fatigue* project comes in.

This initiative is developing a practical, farm-focused toolkit to help owners and workers better understand and manage fatigue risks. In its first phase, the project has focused on four sectors: cotton, grain, dairy, and eggs.

Co-Design in Action

At the heart of this project is a co-design approach. Through a series of workshops with farm owners, managers and workers, the team gathered real-world insights into how fatigue affects their daily operations and what's already being done to manage it.

Amy Cosby is a dairy farmer in Gippsland and a member of the project research team.

“The stories farmers shared at the workshops were really powerful” said Amy.

“One farm owner recounted how, during a critical weather window, they were working around the clock due to staff shortages. Running on just a few hours of broken sleep, they rolled a vehicle while driving late at night between paddocks. Another farmer shared how their partner, utterly exhausted after a long stretch of heavy work, had to crawl up a hill just to lie down and rest”.

“These are real examples of ‘second chances’ that we are learning from and hopefully able to share across agriculture through this project”.

Common themes emerged across the workshops, including a lack of breaks, intense seasonal workloads with little or no downtime, and the relentless need to ‘just get the job done’, especially at peak times such as seeding, harvest, calving and hauling.

Despite the challenges, many participants also shared strategies they use to manage fatigue, like clear communication, teamwork, rotating tasks and leading by example by modelling healthy behaviours.

To build on these findings, a survey is currently underway to gather more input from people working in farming businesses.

The Farming and Fatigue project is administered by AgriFutures Australia and funded by the Rural Safety & Health Alliance (RSHA) which is a collaborative partnership between AgriFutures Australia, Australian Eggs, Australian Wool Innovation, Australian Pork Ltd, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Dairy Australia and Grains Research and Development Corporation. The research team is a collaboration between the Appleton Institute and the Ag Education and Extension team at CQUniversity Australia, and AgHealth Australia at The University of Sydney.

A Toolkit Built by Farmers, for Farmers

The co-design process allows us to combine scientific knowledge about fatigue with lessons from other industries and the lived experiences of those working in agriculture. The result is a toolkit that's practical, easy to use and firmly grounded in reality.

The toolkit will include a guide for owners and managers to assess fatigue risk in their operation and a range of tools that they can choose from to manage their specific risks. Examples of the tools include: a personal fatigue self-assessment guide, journey planning templates, safety promotion materials (such as stickers, flyers, toolbox talk guides), work scheduling tools and information on key topics available in a variety of formats like podcasts.

Due for release later this year, the toolkit aims to support safer, healthier and more productive farms. A second round of workshops is planned to refine the tools with feedback from industry partners and trials will be conducted on individual farms.

While this first version focuses on four sectors, many of the tools will be useful across all areas of agriculture. Future stages of the project will expand the toolkit to other sectors and include contractors and others along the agricultural supply chain.



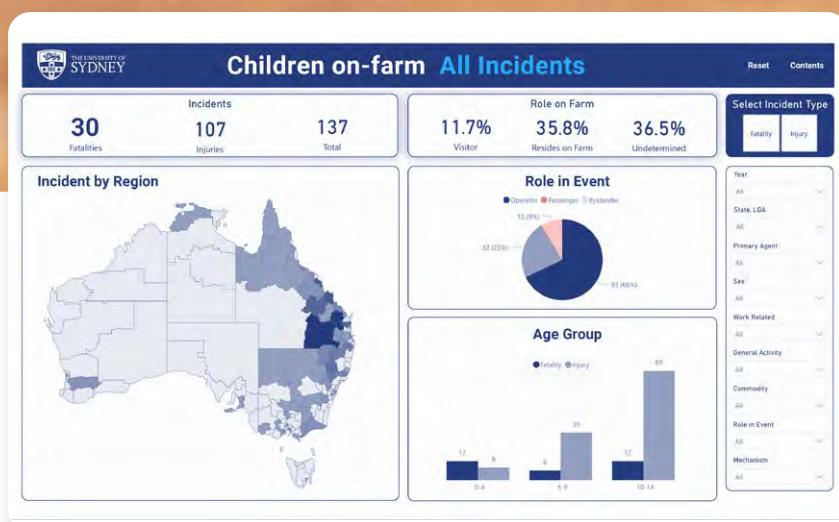
Want to get involved?

If you'd like to contribute to the next stage of toolkit development or want to be notified when it's released, get in touch with the team at ageducation@cqu.edu.au.

FARMING & FATIGUE

Real-time insights

ON-FARM INCIDENTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



Rural Media Farm Injury Dashboard page focusing specifically on incidents on farm involving children under 15 years of age.

The Rural Media Farm Injury Dashboard has recently been launched by AgHealth Australia as part of the Ag Safety Data Net project funded by the Rural Safety and Health Alliance.

The Dashboard is a new tool that provides early insights into on-farm injuries and fatalities across Australia. Drawing on preliminary data from media reports, it gives timely snapshots of incidents occurring in agricultural settings, well before official coronial or workers compensation data becomes available.

The Dashboard receives live data updates, allowing users to monitor injury trends as they happen. Reports can be customised by date, injury type, demographics and industry. A regional breakdown enables users to view data by state or region and visual infographics such as charts and heatmaps are available for media and public use.

For example, there now is the capacity to gain insights into incidents on farm where children are involved – to identify regions where child farm incidents are more prevalent, which age groups are most frequently involved and what roles children commonly had at the time of the incident. This type of analysis greatly assists with targeted safety interventions and educational programs.

“This Dashboard is a critical step forward in improving farm safety. By providing real-time insights into the types of incidents occurring on farms, we can better understand the risks and work together to prevent future injuries and fatalities. It’s a tool for awareness, education and ultimately, saving lives” SAID KERRI-LYNN PEACHEY OF AGHEALTH AUSTRALIA.

This dashboard is a valuable resource for journalists, farm safety advocates, researchers, industry stakeholders, and farmers.

“Farm injuries aren’t just a cost; they also result in a loss of production, impacting farm operations and livelihoods. The Dashboard encourages awareness of these impacts and helps to inform farm safety initiatives by highlighting current risks and contributing factors,” said Ms Peachey.

The Dashboard captures all on-farm injuries and fatalities reported in the media, excluding those from natural or intentional causes. Each incident is coded using the Farm Injury Coding Framework, which includes detailed information such as demographics, role in the event (e.g. operator, bystander, passenger), work-relatedness, causal agents (e.g. tractors, quads, dams), mechanisms of injury, and commodity sector where known. Data within the dashboard is available from 2020 to allow broader data insights and comparative analysis across years. It is important to note that because the data is based on media reports, it is preliminary and subject to change.

The Dashboard is freely accessible online at aghealth.sydney.edu.au/rural-media-farm-injury-dashboard.

For expert commentary, data insights, or media support, please contact: aghealth.admin@sydney.edu.au

Research to underpin safety and health on Australian farms

The Rural Safety & Health Alliance is a collaboration of seven Research Development Corporations that invests in research to improve safety and health on Australian farms.

RSHA Members are AgriFutures Australia, Australian Eggs, Australian Pork Ltd, Australian Wool Innovation, Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Dairy Australia and Grains Research & Development Corporation.

Together, as RSHA, they fund research to help address challenging cross-sector issues. Co-development of projects relevant to multiple agricultural industries and joint investment has enabled RSHA to tackle some big issues around safety on farms that could not have been achieved by one commodity alone.

The focus for RSHA in the last 18 months has been on exploring farmers’ experiences of fatigue and how to manage it, and development of meaningful metrics for farm safety. The Ag Safety Data Net project (which includes the Rural Media Farm Injury Dashboard) will provide an ongoing, trusted evidence-base of metrics to better understand, act and report safety on farm, including reporting in agricultural sustainability frameworks.

RSHA is doing the research needed to underpin solid technical information and campaigns for farmers and is a proud member of Farmsafe Australia.



Why injury and fatality data in Agriculture is so hard to track

AND WHY CONSISTENCY MATTERS

When it comes to farm safety, accurate data saves lives. But getting a clear picture of injury and fatality rates in agriculture is far more complicated than it might seem. Unlike many other industries, farming doesn't fit neatly into a box. It's a workplace, a home, and a lifestyle, which makes injury reporting difficult, inconsistent, and often incomplete.

There are several national agencies collecting statistics on deaths and injuries in agriculture, but each one defines and records 'work-related' in different ways. For example, Safe Work Australia's Traumatic Injury Fatalities (TIF) database only counts fatalities that happen during paid work. That means it won't capture deaths that occur on hobby farms, or injuries involving children, retirees, or visitors even though they're on-farm and often part of the business.

By contrast, the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) collects all reportable deaths, including work and non-work related, investigated by coroners across Australia. These include sudden, violent, or unexpected deaths, which are common in agricultural incidents. NCIS gives a broader picture of what's happening on farms, because it includes more of the 'real-life' scenarios.

Then there's the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which provides valuable data on agricultural demographics and workforce trends. While not directly tied to injury or death data, ABS figures help provide context; how many people are farming, where, and what kind of work they do.

Media monitoring plays a useful role in tracking farm-related incidents by scanning thousands of news articles, online publications, and social media posts for specific keywords like 'farm,' 'agriculture,' or 'grower.' Tools like Meltwater help researchers and safety organisations quickly identify emerging stories or trends across the country. However, this process relies entirely on what gets reported publicly which means many incidents go unrecorded, especially in remote areas or when injuries aren't considered newsworthy. The data is also unverified, so while it can offer valuable insights, it should always be viewed as a starting point, not the full picture.

The problem is that these datasets aren't designed to line up. Each uses different definitions, processes, and levels of access. Some require ethical clearance and long delays (like coronial reports), while others are publicly available but lack the detail needed to understand how and why incidents occur. These differences mean the data often can't be directly compared and when they are compared, it can give a misleading picture of safety progress.

Injury data is even more challenging. Many injuries in agriculture aren't officially recorded, especially on family-run farms. If a farmer breaks a bone or suffers a serious cut and drives themselves to hospital, it might not get flagged as a workplace injury. Intake forms at hospitals don't always capture enough detail to indicate the incident occurred on a farm, and not all farm businesses use formal insurance or workers' compensation systems.

Sometimes, serious injuries are chalked up as 'part of the job' and never reported at all.

This is why we say agriculture is consistently under-reported when it comes to injury data, not because nothing is happening, but because what is happening often flies under the radar of formal systems, or is captured in data sets that aren't consistently reported across States, making them challenging to report on a national level. We wouldn't be comparing apples with apples, so to speak.

All of this underscores the urgent need for consistent, evidence-based national data. If we don't have a clear understanding of what's going wrong, and where, we can't design national campaigns that actually create meaning-

ful shifts in behaviour. At its core, marketing psychology is about understanding what drives human behaviour and using that insight to influence decisions in a meaningful way. This means we need solid data to show us where risk is occurring, who's most affected, and what kinds of messages are likely to create change. When we understand the why behind unsafe behaviours, whether it's time pressure, fatigue, or a false sense of confidence, we can tailor our messaging to cut through. That's why reliable, consistent data sets aren't just useful for research, they're essential tools for designing effective campaigns that genuinely shift attitudes, not just awareness.

That's why the Australian Agricultural Safety Data Network (ASDN) project is so critical. By drawing on comprehensive sources like the NCIS and placing agriculture's unique context at the centre of the analysis, ASDN helps bring clarity to an issue that's often clouded by data gaps, differing data sets and assumptions.

It's also why having AgHealth Australia as part of Farmsafe's national membership has been so important. Their research expertise and long-standing commitment to farm safety ensures we're not just repeating the same stories, we're questioning the narratives, filling in the blanks, and seeking evidence to underpin everything we do.



It's the data that turns instinct into insight, and insight into action that prevents harm before it happens.

FLYING FORWARD

Improving Aviation Safety in Agriculture



Aviation and agriculture have long shared a unique partnership. From aerial spraying and seeding to emergency transport, mustering, and surveillance, aviation is an essential part of how many Australian farms operate. Yet with that reliance comes significant risk, especially when the pressures of seasonal urgency, remote operations, and varying levels of experience or oversight come into play.

Tragically, last year alone, five people lost their lives in aviation-related incidents on Australian farms. These incidents underscore the importance of addressing the specific and complex intersection between aviation safety and agricultural operations. Contributing factors to many incidents can extend beyond the aircraft itself and point to broader issues such as contracting arrangements, pilot fatigue, machinery condition, and mental wellbeing.

In recognition of these challenges, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has proactively engaged with industry stakeholders to better understand and address the safety issues farmers face when working with or around aircraft. Through a recently awarded grant, CASA will be supporting Farmsafe Australia to develop and deliver tailored resources that help bridge the knowledge and communication gap between aviation and agriculture.

This new initiative aims to empower landholders, contractors, and farm staff with clear, practical information on aviation safety and responsibilities. It will cover key topics such as understanding contracting duties, communicating

effectively with aerial operators, ensuring landing areas are safe and accessible, and identifying common safety oversights. Importantly, it will also explore the human side of aviation risks; addressing how mental health, stress, and time pressure can influence decisions made in the air and on the ground.

Farmsafe is proud to be working collaboratively with the Aerial Application Association of Australia (AAAA), which has recently joined as a member organisation. With their deep expertise in agricultural aviation, The AAAA's will be a vital partner in shaping and sharing best practice resources, alongside members such as the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and AgForce Queensland Farmers. Their involvement helps ensure the work is grounded in the realities of aerial work and rural operations and that it reaches both pilots and producers in a way that resonates.

By bringing aviation and agricultural safety conversations into the same space, we are helping create a more unified culture of risk awareness and prevention. Many farmers are simply unaware of their responsibilities when engaging aerial services or flying on their own properties, and likewise, pilots may not always have clear information about the on-ground hazards or expectations of the landholders they work with. Bridging that gap could save lives.

This program is not just about compliance, it's about culture. It's about ensuring that everyone involved in farm-based aviation activity feels confident, informed, and connected. With CASA's support, Farmsafe's coordination, and our member's technical insight, we are laying the foundations for a safer future in the skies above our farms.

Growing safety together: CASA's role in supporting agricultural aviation

By Mark Roberts, CASA Chief Risk Officer

The agricultural aviation sector plays a vital role in Australian farming, supporting productivity and sustainability across the country. But it's also one of the most demanding flying environments. Low-level operations, difficult terrain, tough conditions and time pressure all contribute to the complexity of agricultural flying. That's why CASA's role in agricultural aviation isn't just about oversight – it's about being a genuine partner in safety, with support that reflects the realities of the job.

In January 2025, we published a new agricultural flying sector risk profile, informed by workshops with a diverse cross-section of the industry – from operators and pilots to organisations like Farmsafe, the Northern Territory Cattle-men's Association and aviation-specific groups. It showed the accident rate has fallen over the past 10 years and is now well below the 2015 rate. But other figures are a concern.

Almost 4 in 10 fatal work-related flying accidents happen in agriculture. In the past decade, there have been 9 fatal accidents in spraying and spreading and 7 in mustering. Despite the long-term decline, there was a noticeable uptick in 2024. Accident numbers in the past 12 months are above the 5 and 10 year averages.

Serious incidents have also increased since 2020, again above the longer-term averages.

A collaborative approach to safety

Agricultural flying faces well-known risks. Terrain collisions, wire strikes and loss of control are the most common causes of serious accidents. Fatigue, mental health and workforce shortages are also growing concerns.

CASA can't solve these issues alone. But we can work with industry to reduce risk. That means listening, providing practical tools and advice, and helping operators build strong safety systems.

We're working with Farmsafe, the Aerial Application Association of Australia (AAAA), and other groups to develop resources and share knowledge. These partnerships help us provide information that speaks to the realities of agricultural flying.

One initiative we're supporting Farmsafe to deliver is to produce new aviation safety materials for landowners and farm-workers. It's about making sure the people on the ground understand the risks and know how to help keep pilots safe – especially around unmarked wires. We've sponsored this work through our safety promotion sponsorship program, and we look forward to seeing the outcome.

With AAAA, we're promoting standardised training, consistent procedures and ongoing professional development. We're also exploring how to support mentoring and knowledge-sharing as instructor shortages continue to affect the sector.

Focusing on what matters most

A key finding from the sector risk profile was the need to address wire strikes. In the last 10 years, 187 wire strike incidents or accidents have been reported. Better reporting helps build a clearer picture – but many of these incidents could have been avoided.

We encourage all operators to use tools like the Look up and Live app, available in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It helps pilots identify powerlines before take-off or landing. Other key safety steps include good pre-flight briefings, using systems that enhance situational awareness, standard procedures, and working with landowners to identify and mark hazards.

We're also focussing on other key issues:

- **Fatigue and mental health:** Long hours, extreme weather, seasonal work, isolation, and limited access to support services can all take a toll. CASA is working to raise awareness and improve access to fatigue management and pilot wellbeing resources.
- **Non-compliance:** Underreporting flight hours, skipping maintenance and other safety gaps risk lives and damage the sector's reputation. We're addressing this through education, targeted surveillance and support for operators facing maintenance or supply challenges.
- **Instructor shortages:** With fewer qualified instructors available, training new agricultural pilots is becoming harder. In response, we've updated training and checking rules under Part 138 of CASR and legislated relevant exemptions for CASR Part 137 operators, issued new guidance, and created alternative training pathways for specialised endorsements.

Looking ahead

Safety improvements are most effective when they come from within the sector – supported by data, a strong safety culture and open conversations. CASA is committed to helping build that culture.

We're finding more ways to connect with farmers, pilots and operators. Our Aviation Safety Advisors are available for site visits and seminars. We're also listening to industry feedback and using it to shape our work.

As part of our commitment to safety, I invite every agricultural pilot and operator to take CASA's voluntary Aviation safety pledge. It's a simple way to show leadership and reinforce safety culture across the industry – because every time we think and talk about safety, we help strengthen it.

Working together, we can build a stronger, safer future for agricultural aviation.

Pilots and operators can stay informed by subscribing to our monthly safety newsletter and exploring the resources available on the Pilot safety hub.

LOOK UP AND LIVE *Inattentional Blindness*

“I knew that Powerline was there – i just didn’t see it until I hit it”

This is something I hear almost daily from workers who’ve survived accidental contact with overhead powerlines. They knew the infrastructure was there, they just didn’t register it until it was too late.

The consequences are often devastating. While the operator may walk away, machinery rarely does. The damage to tyres, hydraulics, and electronics is usually extensive. Anecdotally, around 10 such incidents happen every day in Australia; a shocking statistic, if you’ll excuse the pun.

Each year, seven Australians are electrocuted, and every week, one person is hospitalised with severe electrical burns, often requiring amputations. In the US, two non-electrical workers die every week from contact with overhead lines.

Accidental Contacts With Powerlines

When contact occurs, there are usually only three outcomes: **death, devastation,** or being **extremely lucky.** Electricity, when not contained in a proper circuit, is lethal. It can even arc, jumping to complete a circuit, so direct contact isn’t necessary to be seriously injured or killed. When arcing occurs, temperatures can spike to 25,000°C, five times hotter than the surface of the sun. That instantaneous energy release can stop a heart, cause catastrophic burns, and destroy tissue both internally and externally.

Why Does It Happen So Often?

Why are visible powerlines still being hit so frequently?
Why do we miss something so obvious?

It comes down to how our brains work. Ever missed a cyclist at an intersection? You weren’t looking for one. Our eyes don’t operate like video cameras. Instead, the brain filters what it deems important and this leads to *inattentional blindness*.

When workers arrive at a site focused on a task, their brain can filter out even fully visible hazards, like powerlines, simply because they weren’t actively looking for them.

Planning is Prevention

Underground powerlines are rarely struck. Why? Because we know we can’t see them. So, we plan. We use tools like *Before You Dig Australia* to check locations, identify hazards, and take precautions.

With overhead powerlines, the assumption is different, that we’ll see them when we get there. That’s when inattentional blindness strikes.

This is why planning tools like the award-winning [Lookupandlive.com](https://lookupandlive.com) are so valuable.

The tool enables farmers, contractors, and planners to map powerlines on properties and job sites in advance, integrating safety into everyday workflows.

Farmers can identify danger spots for high-clearance machinery; spray rigs, augers, harvesters, while construction companies can plan for line relocation or undergrounding well before work begins.

Control Measures that Matter

Once powerlines are identified, controls must follow. If work comes within the exclusion zone (generally 3 metres, or more depending on voltage), a safety observer is legally required.

Safety observers have one job and only that job: to watch and communicate with machinery operators to ensure they stay clear of the hazard. They cannot be multitasking, assisting, or distracted. If they signal to stop work, it must stop immediately. They are the most important person on-site when powerlines are nearby.

Rotamarkas – Making the Invisible, Visible

One recent innovation helping address inattentional blindness is the Rotamarka; a spinning red-and-white marker fitted to powerlines. Movement catches the human eye and brings the hazard front of mind.

Rotamarkas have proven highly effective in reducing accidental contacts. In Queensland and NSW, power distributors offer subsidised installation. In Queensland, the cost can be as low as \$100 per marker (max 10), and in NSW around \$300 each. These small devices make a big difference by making overhead lines unmissable, especially for aerial operators and machinery drivers.

Human Factors and Technology

We are human. We make mistakes. And while we can train, educate and raise awareness, there's growing recognition that we must engineer solutions that remove human error altogether.

The hierarchy of controls is a safety framework that ranks risk reduction methods from most to least effective. At the top are elimination and engineering controls, strategies that physically remove a hazard or design it out of the task altogether. These are the most effective because they don't rely on people making perfect decisions under pressure.

Removing the human factor from high-risk moments is the future of powerline safety.

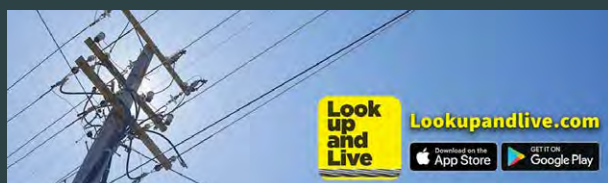
Plan First, Protect Always

This is a difficult and persistent safety challenge. Reducing accidental contact with powerlines takes sustained education, better planning tools, and practical engineering controls.

Too many workers assume powerlines are someone else's problem, until they're not. We must normalise a culture where planning is standard, safety observers are non-negotiable, and visibility is enhanced through tools like Rotamarkas and apps like Lookup and Live.

Powerline safety starts long before the job begins. It begins with respect, not just for electricity, but for the limits of human attention and the value of every life at risk in its presence.

Because in the end, planning protects people.



Glen 'Cookie' Cook has worked in the electrical industry for more than 30 years.

Based in Queensland, he's spent the last two decades with Ergon Energy/Energex, where he's become a well-respected powerline safety advocate, particularly for industries like agriculture, construction and aviation, where accidental contact with powerlines continues to be a serious risk.

Cookie's background is hands-on and he started as an electrician and moved into safety inspections, eventually becoming a senior safety advisor and incident investigator. Over the course of his career, he's been first on scene to hundreds of electric shock incidents, many of them traumatic, and sadly, some fatal.

One incident in particular, where a worker was electrocuted in front of a group of school children, deeply affected him and cemented his resolve to do more in prevention and education. Since then, he's dedicated much of his time to helping workers better understand the risks of working near powerlines and how simple planning can save lives.

Cookie is known for his practical, honest approach. He speaks to farmers, tradies and pilots in a way that's relatable, often using humour, lived experience and plain language to get the message across. He helped develop the Look Up and Live app, which uses mapping to help workers identify powerline hazards before they start a job. The tool is now widely used across Australia.

Outside of work, he's also a talented musician, even reworking classic songs to raise awareness about electrical safety. But it's his down-to-earth passion for saving lives that truly defines him.

See more at [Lookupandlive.com](https://lookupandlive.com). When operating agricultural machinery be aware of overhead powerlines.



FARM SAFETY HAS NO BORDERS

The view from the UK & Ireland

BY STEPHANIE BERKELEY
FARM SAFETY FOUNDATION



As Farm Safety Week unfolds in Australia, the UK and Ireland launch their own 13th annual Farm Safety Week campaign. Stephanie Berkeley, manager of the Farm Safety Foundation, reflects on why farming remains the most dangerous industry in the UK & Ireland, what lessons might resonate globally and questions why is farming still unlucky for some?

When 'I Should Be So Lucky' burst onto the airwaves in the late 80s, its chirpy melody, infectious hook, and Kylie Minogue's effervescent vocals made it an instant global smash. However, beneath the romantic optimism there's a deceptively poignant meditation on longing, fantasy and the emotional dissonance of unrequited love. It's the sound of someone trying to convince herself that happiness is just around the corner, even when reality keeps proving otherwise.

As we launch the 13th annual Farm Safety Week for UK and Ireland, new figures released show that here, farming continues to have the poorest safety record of any occupation.

So, is an improvement in this record just around the corner for us, even when reality keeps proving otherwise?

Agriculture employs just 1% of the UK workforce yet it is responsible for a staggering 19% of all workplace deaths.

That means the people who feed the nation are dying at rates far higher than any other profession. With 462,100 individuals working in the sector, the disproportionate toll is a stark indictment of the risks farmers face daily and a call to action for the industry to confront its safety crisis head-on.

The latest Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and HSE Northern Ireland figures for the industry showed that, in 2024/5, 28 farm workers lost their lives on UK farms.

The picture is similar in the Republic of Ireland where 12 of the 33 reported workplace fatalities in 2024 were in the farming sector (Health & Safety Authority).

The Farm Safety Foundation (Yellow Wellies), the charity behind the annual Farm Safety Week campaign believes that, in addition to the numbers of lives lost on farms every year, the industry needs to address the attitude to risk-taking and poor safety behaviours that result in an additional 18,000 reported injuries to workers every year in GB alone.

According to the UK's leading rural insurer NFU Mutual, there were a total of 894 farm accident claims recorded for 2024/25, an encouraging decrease on the figure of 937 in 2023/24. Causes of the accidents included moving vehicles, falls from height, slips & trips and trapped body parts, all of which cost the rural insurer over £48 million.

But what is leading to those accidents?

Research carried out by the charity in September 2024 revealed that in a sample of 750 farmers across the UK, 81% believe that 'complacency' – always having it done that way – is a major contributor to having a farm accident while 82% of respondents cited 'attitude' as the major contributor.

The research also revealed that, on average, UK farmers worked longer hours in 2024 than they did in 2023. The average number of hours of a full-time worker in the UK is 36.4 hours, however UK farmers average 60 hours a week with an alarming 44% of those aged between 41 and 60 years working more than 81 hours a week.

In addition, 1 in 3 farmers (33%) who admit to working more than 9 hours a day also admit to having had an accident or a near miss in the past 12 months!

Farming is a proud, hard-working industry but it should not come at the expense of health, safety, or life itself. Every injury, every fatality that happens is a tragedy that ripples through families, communities, and generations. We can do better. We need to do better.

As long as farm workers, members of the public and children continue to lose their lives on our farms, we will continue to need a campaign like *Farm Safety Week* and a charity like *Yellow Wellies*.

Farm Safety Week may be once a year but we work all year round to educate, engage and inspire farmers to challenge and change the culture of risk-taking and poor mental health in the industry. Through our education programme, through providing resources such as the *Build Your Own Health & Safety Policy* digital tool, *The Little Book of Minding Your Head* and the recently launched *Little Book of Farm*

Safety. Through this activity, the Farm Safety Foundation is preserving and protecting the physical and mental wellbeing of the next generation of farmers and equipping them with the skills and confidence to live well and farm well.

While there are encouraging signs that attitudes and behaviours towards farm safety are shifting, the pace of change is slow. There are still too many families who have lost loved ones in preventable accidents, too many farmers living every day with chronic pain, long-term illness, or life-altering injuries caused by the very work that sustains our communities.

The message is clear - this must not be accepted as the cost of doing business. A safer future is not only possible, it is within reach, but it needs continued commitment and cultural change. Because change doesn't happen overnight. It begins with a single decision, a single action, a single conversation.

So, we are making a plea this Farm Safety Week... to everyone working and living in the industry – UK, Ireland and Australia – farm safety has no borders after all.

Please, stop and reflect. Look at your daily routine, your equipment, your mindset. Ask yourself, what can I learn from yesterday to make my farm safer today? For myself, my family and for those who work alongside me?

We owe it to those we have lost. We owe it to those still living with the consequences. And we owe it to all the farmers of the future.

Thirteen years on, farming need not remain 'unlucky for some'. The future of our global industry depends on the choices we make today so let's not leave it to chance.

For more information on the UK & Ireland Farm Safety Week visit yellowwellies.org or follow @yellowwelliesUK on Instagram/Facebook/X using the hashtag #FarmSafetyWeek

"Farm safety doesn't stop at our fencelines. By working together globally, as advocates, researchers and industry leaders, we're able to share lessons, spot trends, and better understand which challenges are uniquely environmental, and which ones are part of a bigger global story. That collaboration strengthens all of us. It means we can respond with sharper insights, smarter strategies and a shared commitment to making farming safer for everyone, everywhere." STEVI HOWDLE, EO, FARMSAFE AUSTRALIA

About the Farm Safety Foundation: Rising concern over the continuing high level of fatal and life-changing injury accidents on farms prompted leading rural insurer NFU Mutual to set up a charitable foundation in 2014 to help farmers in the UK work safely (Registered Charity No. 1159000). The Farm Safety Foundation, also known as *Yellow Wellies*, works closely with partners in the industry to engage, educate and communicate strong and relatable farm safety messages. Over the past 11 years, the Farm Safety Foundation has developed and delivered farm safety training to nearly 30,000 young farmers in 46 land-based colleges and universities throughout the UK and through the *Young Farmers' Club* network.

ABOUT FARMSAFE

Farmsafe Australia is the peak body for farm safety, bringing together a diverse network of members from across states and territories, agricultural commodities, and key stakeholder groups within the broader farming community.

Our network includes industry bodies, rural health organisations, and niche groups that play a critical role in shaping

safer farming practices. We are committed to raising awareness, delivering consistent safety messaging, and facilitating knowledge sharing across industry to ensure farm safety remains a priority.

We are also backed by a strong coalition of corporate and government supporters who recognise that farm safety is a shared responsibility. Through collective action, we can drive cultural change, ensuring that every farmer, worker, and rural family has the knowledge and support to stay safe.

OUR VALUES

Farm-Focused

We prioritise the needs of the farming community.

Collaborative

We achieve our vision through our partnerships and industry networks.

Trusted

We provide independent, informed, and reliable information, building trust through our accountability.

Authentic

We are a credible and practical voice for farm safety, grounded in real farming experience and a deep understanding of life on the land.

OUR VISION

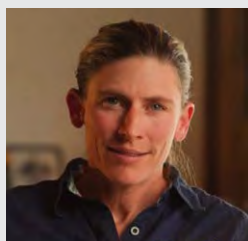
*Safer Farms
Safer Farmers*

OUR MISSION

Improve farm safety attitudes and behaviours through consistent messaging, industry leadership and collaboration.

FSA COMMITTEE

ELECTED EXECUTIVE



Felicity Richards
 Chair

Tasmanian Beef Farmer /
 Industry Advocate



Ruth Thompson
 Deputy Chair

AgForce Queensland
 Farmers
 Policy Director



Kerri-Lynn Peachey
 Secretary

AgHealth Australia
 Farm Safety Research
 Manager / WHS Auditor



Barbara Vaschina
 Treasurer

Bush Heritage Australia
 Health & Safety Program
 Manager



Charlotte Wundersitz
 Public Officer

National Farmers' Federation
 General Manager
 Rural Affairs

COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Caroline Rhodes

Primary Producers
South Australia
 Chief Executive Officer



Chris Stillard

NSW Persimmon Farmer /
 Industry Advocate



Mike Norton OAM FAICD

WA Dairy Farmer /
 Industry Advocate



Dr Richard Franklin

James Cook University
 Professor and Injury
 Prevention Specialist



Nathan Cox

Tasmanian Mixed Farmer /
 TasTAFE Trainer



Paul Sloman

Cotton Australia
 Policy Officer

2025 MEMBERS



Our 33 member organisations reach farmers and rural communities across Australia.

2025 SUPPORTERS

*Partnering with us shows your direct support
for the safety and wellbeing of all farmers,
now and into the future.*



**Your brand will be at the forefront of all engagement with
our members and farmers - we thank those who support
Farmsafe Australia and their commitment to safer farms.**

**Brand safe 30+ years working with industry
Targeted farming audience
Exposure to the wider agriculture industry**

OUR VISION

*Safer Farms
Safer Farmers*



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