

MEDIA RELEASE
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STAY ON THE SAFE SIDE: LOOK OUT FOR LITTLE FARMERS WHEN OPERATING TRACTORS AND MACHINERY ON FARMS

Farmsafe Australia, a leading advocate for child safety on farm, is urging farmers to ‘Stay on the Safe Side’ this Farm Safety Week and make sure that they look out for little farmers when operating tractors and machinery on farms. With the farm usually encompassing the family home, farm children often spend time near or in a high-risk working environment, increasing the potential risks associated with farm equipment. By implementing simple precautions and fostering a safety-conscious culture on farm, we can ensure the well-being of our children and prevent injuries and fatalities from occurring.

According to the 2022 Non-intentional Farm-Related Incidents in Australia report released by AgHealth Australia and AgriFutures, 14% of on-farm fatalities since 2001 were children under the age of 15. Although drowning remains the greatest risk for children on farms, quad bikes, side-by-sides, motorbikes and tractors feature heavily in injury and fatality reports amongst this age group.

To reduce the chances of incidents leading to tragedy, Farmsafe Australia is using this Farm Safety Week to highlight the following key safety measures:

- **Establish Clear Boundaries:** Clearly define and communicate areas where children are allowed to play and no-go zones that are designated for operating tractors and machinery. Ensure that children understand the potential dangers and the importance of staying away from these high-risk work zones.
- **Active Supervision is Essential:** Provide appropriate supervision to children at all times, especially when machinery is in operation. It is not possible to fully pay attention to your child while your mind is on work. Assign responsible adults to supervise and engage children in safe activities away from operating equipment.
- **Remember Small Visitors Don’t Always Know the Risks:** Ensure that any child that visits your farm is aware of the risks, hazards and rules associated with your farming environment. Visitors on farm account for a significant proportion of injuries and fatalities.
- **Educate and Raise Awareness:** Educate children about the dangers associated with farm vehicles and machinery. Teach them to recognise and respect the power of these machines and explain how difficult it is to see and hear small children from the cab of tractors. Focus on emphasising that farm vehicles are not toys and should never be approached without adult supervision.
- **Match Farm Chores to Strength and Skill Level:** Not all children develop physically or mentally at the same rate. Ensure that you match chores to the child’s specific skill and strength level.
- **Install Safe Play Areas:** Implement physical barriers such as fences and safety latched gates to prevent children from entering areas where machinery is being used. These barriers act as a visual reminder and serve as a physical deterrent against access to the worksite.
- **Be Vigilant:** Before starting any machinery, conduct a thorough inspection of the surroundings. Check blind spots and mirrors for visibility and always be aware of the presence of children around farm equipment.

The Farmsafe Australia National Farm Safety Education Fund Strategy highlighted child safety as an impact opportunity in 2020 under the ‘Investing in our Next Generation of Farmers’ pillar and was chosen by the federal government to be open for an additional \$1.6M in grant funding.

One of the recipients of the funding, Primary Producers South Australia (PPSA), recently launched their ‘Farm Safety for Kids’ resources, aimed at years 5, 6, and 7 students. These resources include a series of seven

videos which are accompanied by curriculum-linked booklets to assist teachers, students and their families in having open and honest conversations about farm safety.

PPSA's CEO, Caroline Rhodes, stated, " Growing up on a farm is a wonderful experience, but protecting our little people is of utmost importance. We need to continue to educate our kids about safety, provide information and resources to them and their families and hopefully raise a much more safety conscious generation to take over our farms," she said. "The team at PPSA are passionate about keeping farmers and their families safe. Being a member of Farmsafe Australia is an important part of our organisation leading by example and prioritising the safety of our members."

Farmsafe Australia Chair, Felicity Richards, echoed Ms Rhodes, saying, "By adopting these safety measures and fostering a culture of awareness, we can prevent tragedy and ensure the well-being of our future farming generations. We need to let our kids be kids and although that includes getting them interested in farming, it shouldn't include putting them in high-risk working situations and hoping for the best."

Farmsafe Australia remains committed to promoting child safety on farms and will continue to advocate for the well-being of children in rural and regional Australia. For more information on child safety information, safe play areas and other child-related resources, please visit www.farmsafe.org.au .

About Farmsafe Australia:

Farmsafe Australia is the leading Australian agricultural voice dedicated to promoting farm safety, providing educational resources, and advocating for best practices in the agricultural industry. With a mission to reduce the incidence of injury and fatality on Australian farms and protect the well-being of farmers and their families, Farmsafe Australia actively collaborates with industry stakeholders and raises awareness about the importance of safety on Australian farms.

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