Staying Safe on the Farm
A Guide For Young Farmers

WHO WOULD FILL YOUR BOOTS?®

FARM SAFETY FOUNDATION

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It will never happen to me...

Have you ever stood at the side of a road, ready to cross and spotted a bus or lorry approaching at full speed and made the decision to wait until the vehicle had passed before crossing?

Well there you have it. You've done a risk assessment. No paperwork. No rules and regulations to follow. Just the thought of what could happen if you stepped into the path of the oncoming vehicle and the decision to wait until it is safe.

You do these risk assessments every day so why is it such a big chore to do them in the workplace? But, unfortunately, this is the attitude many farmers have and this is something that needs to change – especially as farming has the poorest safety record of any occupation in the UK.

The good news is that there are signs that this attitude is changing, especially among younger farmers. The Farm Safety Foundation, or Yellow Wellies as some of you know us, have been delivering our farm safety training to colleges, universities and Young Farmers Clubs across the UK and we have also been carrying our research into these attitudes and behaviours. Over the past four years, the number of farmers under 40 admitting that they would think twice before taking a risk has leapt from 74% to 94% plus an impressive 90% of those interviewed have thought about the consequence of having a life changing farm accident – this figure has also jumped from 76% in 2017.

These signs are encouraging but there is so much more to do. Risk assessments need to be something you do instinctively every day – a bit like putting on your seatbelt every time you get into a car.

These are little changes but changes that can save your limb... or your life!

Working with Machinery

You will come into contact with different types of machinery every day. Always be careful as your hands, hair and clothes can be caught by unguarded PTO shafts or other unguarded moving parts such as pulleys and belts.

Think about it? Do you really know what you are doing?

Only those who are authorised and familiar with the safe operation of the equipment or those undergoing supervised training are actually allowed to operate the PTO equipment between the tractor and machine. Machinery is one of the main reason why people are losing their lives and their limbs on farms but why is this?

What's the danger?

- Not using the right shaft and engine speed.
- Not carrying our pre-start checks – do you always ensure PTO guards/shields and restraining chains are in place? Every time? Be Honest!
- Using PTO equipment that has missing or damaged guards or missing chains.
- Incorrect size or length of PTO guard. Badly fitting guards are just as dangerous as no guard at all.
- Not regularly cleaning and greasing the sliding inner and outer surfaces of the guard and the spring-loaded plunger of the quick release yoke.
- Turning too sharply can cause the lower links or tractor tyre to foul or damage the PTO shaft

So...

- Always follow SAFE STOP if you need to check equipment, carry out maintenance work or clear a blockage
- Fully apply the handbrake
- Put all controls in neutral
- Stop the engine
- Remove the key from the ignition
- Never step across a rotating power shaft, always walk around the machine Ensure close fitting clothing is worn. Remove any scarves, jewellery and headphone wires and tie long hair back or keep it under a cap.
- Check your surroundings – are there children or visitors about?
- Discuss the risks regularly with your team if you have one, and train everyone in safe working methods, and emergency procedures.
- Make sure everyone carries their mobile phone with them - don't leave it in the cab.
- Download What3words, complete your ICE (In Case of Emergency) and have emergency contact numbers programmed into your phone.

Working with Transport

Safe Stop

- Fully apply the handbrake
- Put all controls in neutral
- Stop the engine
- Remove the key from the ignition

Safe Site

- Vehicles and pedestrians must be separated, where possible
- Visiting drivers should be made aware of site rules, including sign in procedures, parking areas, one-way systems etc.
- Create vehicle routes to reduce the need to reverse, e.g. by adding turning circles, or one-way systems;
- Make sure traffic routes are properly maintained and lit;
- Use warning and speed limit signs
- Locate silos and stores in a safe place away from OHPLs to reduce risks during feed deliveries

Safe Driver

If you are driving on or visiting a farm, always make sure...

- The driver is medically fit to drive, trained, insured and authorised to use the vehicle
- The driver knows how to safely enter and exit the vehicle – there IS a right and wrong way!
- No one ever approaches or walks behind or beside a reversing vehicle. If you must approach, attract the driver's attention first when it is safe to do so and get them to stop.
- No one ever attempts to squeeze between a moving vehicle and a doorway or fixed object.
- Everyone wears high visibility clothing to help others see you.

Safe Vehicle

- Check your vehicle is well maintained - lights, beacons, brakes, handbrake, tyres etc.
- Do they have good all-round visibility? Are mirrors and windows clean and in good order, and other devices (eg rear view cameras) fitted where required?
- Did you know that audible alarms can be fitted to vehicles to warn people when they are reversing? Get one!

Working At Height

Every year, thousands of farm workers are injured and too many die in avoidable farming accidents when working at height.

The risk of falling from height or being struck by a falling object accounts for almost 30% of all fatal accidents in agriculture. A fall from height can lead to long term injuries and make it difficult to keep on farming. Most accidents of this type happen because the work is not properly planned, the risks are not recognised and managed or the equipment used is either faulty, not appropriate, or used incorrectly.

It's worth remembering these four steps
Avoid - Plan - Prevent - Train

- Avoid working at height if possible – this is the best option!
- Where it isn't possible, plan the task properly, using safe equipment.
- Consider whether you need specialist contractors to carry out the work.
- Remember that preventing a fall is better than mitigating against a fall, so given a choice between the two, good edge protection is generally preferable to soft landing systems (air bags / bales for example).
- Provide training for any employees who are required to work at height.

So...

- do as much work as possible from the ground;
- ensure you can get safely to and from where you're working at height;
- ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly;
- make sure you don't overload or overreach when working at height;
- take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces;
- provide protection from falling objects;
- consider your emergency evacuation and rescue procedures.

Working With Livestock

Handling cattle and livestock always involves risks: the risk of being hurt physically by an animal that is frightened or has been startled and the risk of being hurt due to poorly thought out or maintained handling facilities.

Many of us never stop to consider why animals behave as they do and, more importantly, what this behaviour could mean to our personal safety. Animal-handling practices are often inherited from watching others and from personal experiences growing up on the farm. But, too often, this results in bad habits, unsafe livestock handling and restraint practices.

Although most animal incidents are not fatal, many men, women and children get hurt unnecessarily every year due to not thinking or risk taking. Broken bones, crushed and mashed limbs, work absences and unnecessary medical expenses are some of the results of livestock-related incidents so it's important to think about improving your attitude as well as your handling systems and making them safer and more efficient.

SO...

- Take the time to understand/know the behaviours of the livestock you are working with.
- Ensure only persons authorised and familiar with cattle or those undergoing supervised training are allowed to enter the cattle barns/pens/parlour and handle the cattle, especially if this involves working with bulls.
- Make sure they are handled by trained and agile workers. Consider the risk to persons over 65 years or if someone has reduced agility– they may not be able to move out of the way quickly in the event of an emergency.
- No children should be allowed to enter cattle housing or handle cattle.
- Where possible ensure there are two people present, especially if you are trying to separate an animal from the rest of the herd or handling bulls.
- Make sure your working area is safe with safety measures in place. e.g. good handling facilities; adequate gates, a well maintained crush, fence heights appropriate for the animals being managed. etc.
- Always have an escape route or refuge for emergency situations while working with animals

ALWAYS BE CAREFUL AROUND COWS AND HEIFERS WITH NEW-BORN CALVES AND NEVER EVER TURN YOUR BACK ON A NEWLY CALVED COW

Overhead Power Lines

Overhead power lines are common in rural areas. They are found on both wooden poles and steel pylons. All these lines can kill you and extra care should be taken by those working in the agriculture industry.

The risk to farmworkers is not only during harvest, but all year round. Every year, approximately 225 reported incidents occur where farm vehicles and machinery make contact with overhead lines. These incidents usually involve equipment such as tipping trailers, lorry mounted cranes, combine harvesters and telehandlers.

And you do not even have to contact the line!

At high voltage, electricity can jump gaps, so machinery doesn't have to touch a powerline to result in a serious or lethal electric shock so even getting too close to overhead power lines can be dangerous!

- Think about the job you are going to do and make preparations to do the whole task safely.
- Identify areas where it is unsafe for materials handlers, tipping lorries and cranes to work and mark these on a map.

If you happen upon an accident involving an overhead power lines

- Stay calm, keep clear and call for help.
- Call 105, the national number for power emergencies in GB – your call will be routed to your local electricity distribution company. Request that the power line is immediately disconnected because of an accident.
- If a piece of machinery or equipment has made contact with an overhead powerline, touching that equipment could be fatal so stand well clear. The driver of a vehicle which has come into contact with an overhead power line should remain safe by staying in the cab
- Keep everyone else out of the way.
- Call the emergency services using either 999 or 112. Explain the nature of the injury (this helps prioritise the type and speed of responder).

Assist the injured person

- Remind affected person of action they should take (whilst keeping yourself at a safe distance).
- Tell them to STAY in cab until the power network confirms the line is off.
- Ask the driver to DRIVE clear of the wires if they can.
- If you must get off then you should jump clear making leaping strides so that one foot is off the ground at all times until you are at least 5 metres away.
- Keep others away from the vehicle. Touching it or even getting too close could kill them.
- NEVER RETURN TO THE VEHICLE – wires can re-energise without warning.

Useful Numbers

999 Emergency Services
112 EU Emergency Services
105 UK Power Networks

03000 111 999 Farming Help
0300 111 4166 RSABI
0800 138 1678 Rural Support NI

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