

# Safeguard

## Agriculture Child safety on farms



Government  
of South Australia  
SafeWork SA

### Objective

To provide advice on rural work practices that help protect the safety of children on farms.

### Background

Any farming property can be a dangerous place for children. Unintentional injury can occur when adults underestimate the level of risk and hazard of farm activities.

Major causes of child deaths and injuries on farms include:

- falls from plant and machinery
- drowning in dams, tanks and creeks
- injury from guns or chemicals
- accidents with tractors, motorbikes, quad bikes or other farm machinery
- contact with livestock.

### Risk control measures

The mix of home, work and recreation on a farm creates a complex environment, which compounds the risk to children. It is not always possible to remove the risk, but adults must limit access to hazards for young children, including visitors to the farm.

It is recommended that you walk through your farm and assess each and every area according to the age, physical size and ability of your child/children. Try to see things from their point of view.

For a child-safe farm:

- lock away chemicals, pesticides and explosives when not in use
- supervise children when they are around water – remember that toddlers can drown in only a few centimetres of water – and have them learn to swim as soon as possible

- fence off pools and septic tanks
- securely cover wells, tanks, plunge and spray dip sumps
- never let children ride as passengers on tractors, quad bikes, machinery or the trays of vehicles
- remove ignition keys from any machinery and vehicles when they are not in use
- lock away guns and ammunition in a gun safe
- do not allow children to handle or use explosives
- do not allow children to lift, carry, push or pull heavy objects
- store equipment securely e.g. do not lean heavy tyres or ladders against walls where children can knock them over or attempt to use them
- keep children away from work that is excessively noisy or dusty
- keep children away from potentially dangerous confined spaces e.g. silos, sheep dips, underground water tanks
- protect children from overexposure to the sun – keep them indoors where possible between 10am and 2pm, or ensure they have adequate sunblock protection and re-apply it regularly
- ensure electrical equipment is out of reach
- make sure that all machinery is fitted with appropriate safety guards e.g. guard exposed drive belts, pulleys, auger screws and cogs
- make sure that hazardous areas are locked and inaccessible e.g. paddocks, animal pens, workshops
- make sure that children cannot access and climb ladders by adequately guarding all ladders
- supervise children with livestock, especially when working in stockyards
- teach children basic animal handling skills – be calm, move slowly, give the animal space, avoid loud noises, avoid their hind legs, wear safety boots/shoes – and remember that even good tempered stock can accidentally knock children over.

## Safe play area

Create safe and secure play areas for children, both indoors and outdoors. Fence off part of the yard close to the house for children to use. This is especially important for young children. Supervise their activities regularly.

## Older children

Older children can assist around the farm, but must be supervised at all times. To encourage safe practices:

- educate them about potential hazards
- teach them safety rules that apply to the different areas of the farm
- make sure they understand that certain areas are out-of-bounds e.g. silos, grain loading areas, farm machinery, animal pens
- make sure they are trained to do the work safely, including using protective clothing and equipment
- do not allow children under 16 years of age to ride quad bikes, either as operators or passengers.

## Emergency information

Prepare a farm emergency plan for dealing with a serious farm accident.

Teach your children how to phone for help in the event of an emergency, and ensure that emergency telephone numbers (e.g. ambulance, doctor, police, SA Country Fire Service, hospital, nearest neighbour) are available at every telephone. Where possible, program emergency numbers into the speed dial of the phone.

Ensure that children can describe the exact location of the property, including the Rural Property Address (RPA) number.

Regularly talk through your emergency plan with your family and other workers

## First aid

Make sure that the farm has a suitable first aid kit that is easy to access.

It is good practice to make sure that one person on the farm is trained in first aid. Remember that emergency medical treatment for children is not always the same as for adults. Ideally, parents should also take a paediatric first aid course.

## Further information

Farmsafe Australia  
[www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au)

Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety  
[www.aghealth.org.au](http://www.aghealth.org.au)

Child and Youth Health  
[www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com)

Kids Alive (learn water safety/how to swim)  
[www.kidsalive.com.au](http://www.kidsalive.com.au)

Kidsafe (Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia)  
[www.kidsafe.org.au](http://www.kidsafe.org.au)

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