

Land & Water fact sheet

Farm safety

What is it?

Farm safety refers to the management of potential hazards around the farm. We all know that it is very important but actually putting it into practice is often overlooked.

Farm safety management includes:

- operating machinery
- back burning and incinerator use
- noise protection
- protection of employees' welfare
- chemical use hazards
- employees' lungs
- dams and water safety
- personal protection from the sun

Although you may be aware of many of the hazards around your farm, other visitors and family members may not.

How does it help me?

Looking after yourself, your family and your workers can reduce the amount of lost time due to injury and illness. The time taken to make sure everyone is aware of occupational health and safety requirements will be cost effective in reducing damage to equipment and people. Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) is an important matter and time should be taken to become familiar with your rights and obligations as an employer or an employee.

Farm machinery

Regular checks and maintenance of farm machinery will ensure they are in good working order. Make sure protector guards, side mirrors and other safety features are in good operating order (be aware you can void your insurance by altering farm machinery yourself). Farm workers should be made aware of all safety procedures around your property. This will save you lost time and serious or

potentially fatal injury to you or other workers.

Burning off

Burning off scrub or household rubbish is an easy way to reduce farm waste. However, fires pose many threats. Make sure that procedures are followed when burning off so that the many associated risks to property and person can be reduced. Simple measures such as making sure that weather conditions are suitable before commencing burning and that fire fighting equipment is nearby will reduce risks. Everyone else on the farm should be aware that burning off is taking place. Although there might seem to be many costs involved with being prepared for a worst case scenario, the saving of lives, buildings and property will be worth every cent.

Noise pollution

Continual loud noise (noise pollution) is something that we may be used to and might not even realise the permanent damage it can cause. Basic protective gear such as ear plugs or ear muffs can reduce the effects of loud noise in your ears affecting your hearing. Noise pollution can also carry beyond the farm fences. Trees along fence lines are not only effective for reducing wind, but will also help to block noise that may travel a long distance.

Ageing

We all need to consider the potential limitations to our physical strength and agility as we age. This is particularly significant for growers/farmers over 60. Finding out what

On-farm eco-efficiency measures continued

new technologies are available or getting some extra help in for the harder jobs, will make your work easier for years to come.

Chemical use

Having the proper certificates or permits for chemical purchase and use is important. It not only means that you can effectively use these products to combat pests and diseases on your crop, but you also will minimise the risk to yourself and others.

There are established rules and protocol for chemical use. These rules should be adhered to by all workers on the farm. Breaching of health and safety practices should be taken seriously as there is the potential for greater hazards than a mess in the banded area. A chemical pesticide or fertiliser spill could cause damage to both crops, humans, animals and the aesthetic value of your farm. All proper procedures should be strictly adhered to, to avoid injury and damage.

Looking after your lungs

Farms may seem to be from the outset all about fresh air, outdoors and nature. However, spray mist, dust, compost materials and mouldy hay for example are all potential health risks if breathed in. Establishing proper practices to minimise the risk of exposure to these is important for long term health.

Fencing water supplies

Fencing dams and waterholes is an effective way to reduce risk around the farm. Fencing not only reduces the risk of children falling in but also can stop unwanted animals standing in the water. Remotely located dams and waterholes may not require a fence; however it is important to make sure that people working and living on the farm are aware of a dam's location and depth.

Looking after your skin

One of the greatest long term risks on a farm the effect of the sun. The sun's UV rays are extremely damaging to your skin. Make sure that you protect your skin by covering up, staying out of the sun in the hottest part of the day and wearing sunscreen to reduce the

risk of developing skin cancer. Ensure that you care for your workers in the same ways. Skin cancers such as melanomas have the potential to kill if left untreated or undiscovered.

Mental health

One thing that must be looked after is your mental health. Stress is a major cause of physical illness in your body. If you are feeling that you can not cope with your work load, are feeling stressed or exhausted or you notice changes in the mood or behaviour of a worker, then take the time to talk to someone about the problem. It is easier to talk it out before the problem gets out of hand.

Children around the farm

The safety of your children and the children of your workers around the farm is very important. Most of you will be busy in the field and it is therefore important that they are especially aware of the hazards around the farm. Remember to always supervise your children are near water holes and make sure they know what they can and can not go near or touch. Taking the time to educate others about dangers around the farm could save your family and your workers families many broken bones and trips to the hospital.

To find out more about Farm Management Systems contact Growcom on 07 3620 3863 or visit www.growcom.com.au/knowledgeplant

References

Farm Safety Association Inc. 101-75 Farquhar Street Guelph, Ontario, USA

<http://www.farmsafe.org.au/images/pdfs/FSWPack.pdf>

<http://www.dir.qld.gov.au/workplace/rights/yourobligation/info/index.htm>



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