



# Children and young people

Farms are environments where families work, live and play. As a workplace, farms raise unique challenges that other businesses may not even consider.

## KEY POINTS

- > Children are not small adults and perceive things differently to adults.
- > Children have less strength, co-ordination and understanding of situations than adults.
- > Children want to explore, try new things, push boundaries.
- > It's fun to play on a farm, but farms are not playgrounds.

## THE MAIN RISKS FOR CHILDREN

- > **Animals** can be unpredictable, especially if startled or protecting their young. Children lack the judgement to deal with animals safely and don't have the size, speed and dexterity to get out of the way safely. Children can also get animal diseases like leptospirosis, ringworm and campylobacter.
- > Children lack the judgement, body weight and strength to handle full-sized farm vehicles like **quad bikes**.

- > Younger children need to understand that they can be injured when playing on or near **tractors**. Older children are likely to be injured as passengers or while carrying out farm tasks.
- > Have a map of all the **water** hazards on the property – rivers, creeks, troughs, dips, tanks, dams and ponds. Water can also burn, especially in the dairy shed where hot water is used at scalding temperatures.
- > All farm **machinery** has the potential to harm – even guards could have holes small enough for children's hands to get through.
- > It is the adult's responsibility to make sure dangerous **agri-chemicals** are stored safely and out of reach of children.

## TIPS FOR CHILD SAFETY ON FARMS

- > Walk around the farm with children and identify hazards together.
- > Adult supervision is vital – for young children it must be close and active.
- > Lead by example, for example always wear an approved helmet on a quad bike.
- > Think about having safety fences around play

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areas, animal pens, work areas and water spots.

- > Keep doors shut or locked so children can't get in where they shouldn't.
- > Use safety guards on all machinery.
- > Store dangerous agri-chemicals safely out of children's reach.
- > Remove keys from doors and vehicles. Never leave vehicles unattended with the motor running.
- > Make sure it is safe to reverse farm vehicles. Walk around the vehicle and check that children are a safe distance away before starting the engine.
- > Children should not ride on tractors, quad bikes or on the back of utes.
- > Road safety on private and public roads is vital. Have children in car seats and seat belts when in cars, utes and trucks.
- > Make sure children wear high-visibility clothing when out and about on farm.
- > Teach children to wash and dry their hands after touching animals.
- > Cover tanks and wells with child restraint covers or fill in disused ones.
- > Tie spare tractor wheels to walls or lie them flat so they can't crush a child.
- > Make sure children ride bikes that are appropriate for their age and height, and are in line with manufacturers' specifications.
- > If children are riding a smaller model farm bike, they need to wear an approved helmet and closed-in shoes. An adult should always supervise them.
- > Teach children the dangers of speeding and uneven ground.
- > Make sure children know what to do in an emergency: what to do, where to go and who to call. Teach children basic first aid.
- > Make it a rule for older children to always say

where they are going.

- > Children do listen, understand, remember and apply rules over time. But things change so farm safety needs constant attention.
- > The Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016 (the Regulations) require that a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no worker aged less than 15 years is present in an area of work, or carries out work of a type that is likely to cause harm to their health and safety.

### PCBUs

- > must not let young people under 15 years old lift heavy weights or do work that might affect their health
- > must not let people under 15 years old work, or help with work on machinery
- > should ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers under 16 years old do not work between 10pm and 6am.

The Regulations require that a PCBU with management or control of a workplace ensures, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no worker aged less than 15 years drives or rides on a tractor.

However, this does not apply to a worker aged 12 years or over who drives on a tractor if the tractor is being used for agriculture work; and the young worker is to be fully trained, or being trained, in the safe operation of the tractor and the safe use of any implement being towed by it.

WorkSafe strongly recommends that young people on farms only operate vehicles designed for their age and capabilities.

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