



Kids Will Be Kids!

Summer is an anticipated time of year for families in our nation. Vacation questions about “where to go” and “how long to stay” have been part of the vacation equation since last year. For family farmers, having the children home from school for three months to help with the chores is a more likely scenario, especially on dairy and livestock farms where farming activities are a 7-day a week year round proposition.

Farm kids are just like their city cousins in many ways. They eagerly anticipate the onset of summer vacation...they look forward to being out of school...and they look forward to an opportunity to make some spending money. Another similarity among all kids is their tendency to copy the habits of adults with whom they live and/or work. If these habits are unsafe, then it is quite likely that kids will follow suit and copy these actions. In other words, “Kids Will Be Kids.”

The data collected from farm states is very clear. Summer, and the fall harvest seasons are very dangerous times of the year for children and youth on farms and ranches in the U.S. Of the 100+ children and youth under 19 years killed on farms each year, nearly half occur in the summer months and in the month of October. With summer upon us, we should do something about this hazard now, by setting a good example for all kids.

The younger the kids, the more likely they are to copy what they see adults do. If an adult steps over an operating auger, the child may attempt to do the same. This type of activity is extremely dangerous since many augers do not have the proper guarding. Young children who can not (and should not) step over the auger, may step into it with horrifying results. In the same vein, if adults don't buckle up in their pick-up or tractor, their children may grow up with the same bad habit.

The worst threat to children is the lack of a second seat with a safety belt on most farm tractors and machinery. Extra-riders are at extreme risk of injury or death when riding along on farm equipment without being safely protected. Although many adults may be tempted to take a child along for a ride, they should resist this urge and keep their children and grandchildren off of operating farm machinery.

Another safety precaution to keep in mind is to never permit children to attempt chores that could put them at risk. Although they may indicate their willingness to do a job, always be sure that they are mature enough to handle the task. Only give them work equal to their intelligence and dexterity.

The overall message is very simple. Always set a good example for the children who live, work and play on your family farm. And remember, “Kids Will Be Kids.”

- Dr. Sam Steel
Director
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