



Safety focus on: Children on farm

This guide highlights the key risks to children on farms and provides practical advice on how you can make your farm a safer place for your children and young visitors.

The Law

The Prevention of Accidents to Children in Agriculture Regulations 1998 (PACAR) makes it illegal to allow a child under 13 to ride on or drive agricultural self-propelled machines (such as tractors and quad bikes) and certain other farm machinery. However, children under 13 years old may legally ride on a trailer, or on a load carried by a trailer, if there are adequate means, such as edge protection, to prevent them falling from it.

If you are employing someone to work on your farm that is under 18 years of age you must carry out a risk assessment on the jobs they will be doing, as you would for any employee, before they start work. However, if they are under 16 and are therefore of compulsory school age, you need to inform the child's parents of the outcome of the risk assessment and what measures you have put in place for their safety.

Introduction

Over the last 10 years, 31 children and young people, under the age of 16, have died in work-related incidents on farm, as well as a further 12 fatalities between the ages of 16 and 18.

The most common causes of death and major injury are falling from or coming into contact with vehicles and machinery, falls, drowning and asphyxiation.

There are three main areas you should focus on when looking at how to make your farm a safer place as regards children:

1. [Safe Site](#)
2. [Safe Work](#)
3. [Safe Driver](#)

Safe Site

Every year people die from being run over in farm yards. Many of these accidents tragically involve children, who may not anticipate what a vehicle will do next.

One of the best ways to keep children safe on farm is to keep them away from the potential dangers. Where possible, you should make sure immediate dangers such as propped gates and wheels are secured and try to keep pedestrians (child or adult) separate from moving machinery.

For young children a secure fenced space to play in means they can enjoy playing outside, while being kept away from unsafe areas. If this is not practicably possible, consider stopping access to dangerous areas with:

- Fences
- Gates
- Locked doors
- Blanking panels on ladders

Children are naturally curious and farms are an inviting place to play and explore. They will not understand the potential dangers in farm yards and with modern cabs, you may not be aware they are there until it is too late. Children should only be allowed into areas where machinery is moving when they are properly supervised.

Make sure people working on the farm know if there is likely to be children present and explain that staff should stop operations if children are in the farm yard and send them off somewhere safe.

When children are old enough to be allowed around the farm without constant supervision, communication becomes extremely important. Take a few moments to consider your own farm and make sure children are told, warned and constantly reminded about the potential dangers and risks associated with:

- Vehicles and machinery
- Animals
- Haystacks
- Slurry pits
- Workshops
- Chemical stores
- Unwashed hands



Case Study

An eight-year old child was killed under the wheels of a reversing forklift truck (FLT). The child was staying at his grandparents during the school holidays, where he was given rides around the farm. It is not known exactly what happened but it is believed the child either fell from the FLT whilst it was reversing or ran towards the reversing vehicle and was run over.

The farming partner was prosecuted and fined £17,500 plus £2,779 costs.

[\(back to the top\)](#)

Safe Work

Farming is a very hands-on industry and we all want to increase the knowledge and understanding of today's youth about agriculture and where their food comes from.

The Regulations do not prevent learning from experience, but there are a few principles to consider with young children:

- A child should be directly supervised
- A child should not be involved in a task that can be considered dangerous
- A child should not be put in a dangerous place
- The person doing the task should not be expected to supervise the child at the same time, therefore another adult is required to supervise

After any activities around the farm, especially when in contact with animals, make sure you supervise young children thoroughly washing their hands.

If the young person is aged 13-18 they can work on the farm once you have conducted a risk assessment of the work they are likely to do, taking into account their possible lack of experience, awareness of risks and physical ability.

You should also get written consent from the young person's parents for them to work on your farm. Your local authority or child employment/education welfare officer will also need to be consulted before allowing children of

compulsory school age to work on your farm. Local authority by-laws require licensing of child workers.

A young person is likely to require a lot of training and supervision when they first start work, but as their experience increases, you can reassess their competence and decide what level of supervision is most appropriate.

Case Study

A 14 year old schoolboy was on a work experience placement, bagging and heat-sealing dried grass on a grass baling machine. The hydraulic side door on the baler trapped his hand as he thrust his arm up the discharge tube, breaking three fingers of his right hand.

The subsequent investigation found the boy had been set to work on the baler because a team member failed to turn up, but had not been adequately trained or supervised.

The farming company was prosecuted for failing to provide adequate instructions, training and supervision. The company was fined £3,500 plus £2,588 costs.

[\(back to the top\)](#)

Safe Driver

Even when the vehicle is stationary, you should make sure it is properly secured and made safe by following the Safe Stop procedure:

Always follow the Safe Stop procedure, no matter how short your stop:

1. **Handbrake on**
2. **Controls in neutral**
3. **Engine off**
4. **Key out**



Depending on age, a young person is only allowed to drive selected machines and perform certain jobs. However you should assess the individual's competency and experience, not just their age before allowing them to operate any machine.



Age	Allowed	Not allowed
Under 13	May ride on a trailer, or on a load carried by a trailer, if there are adequate means, such as edge protection, to prevent them falling from it	Must not ride on or drive agricultural self-propelled machines (such as tractors and quad bikes) and certain other farm machinery
13-16	May ride on a properly designed passenger seat and conduct the following operations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a low-powered tractor with trailed roller or harrows • Use a pedestrian-controlled slurry or manure scraper • Work on the inspection platform of a potato harvester • Ride an ATV, making sure their weight in ratio to the ATV is appropriate, as weight transfer is key to safe and controlled handling 	Must not drive or operate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towed or self-propelled harvesters and processing machines • Trailers or feed equipment with conveying, loading, unloading or spreading mechanisms • Power-driven machines with cutting, splitting, or crushing mechanisms or power-operated soil-engaging parts • Chemical applicators such as mounted, trailed or knapsack sprayers • Materials handlers such as lift trucks, skid steer loaders and track-laying equipment
16-18	May use larger machines and powered implements, but as an employer you must decide if this can be done, depending on the young person's experience and competence, not just their age	

Table 1. Summary of activities young people are allowed to do on farm, depending on age.

When a young person (13-16) is operating a tractor, you must ensure:

- No other child or young person is on the tractor
- No other person is on the tractor, other than for training
- No members of the public are close by

Case Study

A 14 year old farmer's son was driving a tractor and power harrowing, with a 16 year old alongside. After dismounting, the older boy tried to climb back on the moving tractor, but lost his footing, fell under the rear wheels and was then run over by the harrow. His leg was so badly damaged that it had to be amputated below the knee.

The farmer was prosecuted for failing to prevent a young person driving a tractor from carrying another young person as a passenger and for allowing a young person under school compulsory age to use a powered implement. He was fined £5,000 plus £1,200 costs.

[\(back to the top\)](#)

Further information

HSE can be contacted for specific health and safety information at www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture

For agricultural training search www.lantra.co.uk/CourseFinder or www.lantra-awards.co.uk.

Alternatively call 0845 707 8007.