

Farm Safety Week 2017

Day 5: Child safety on farms



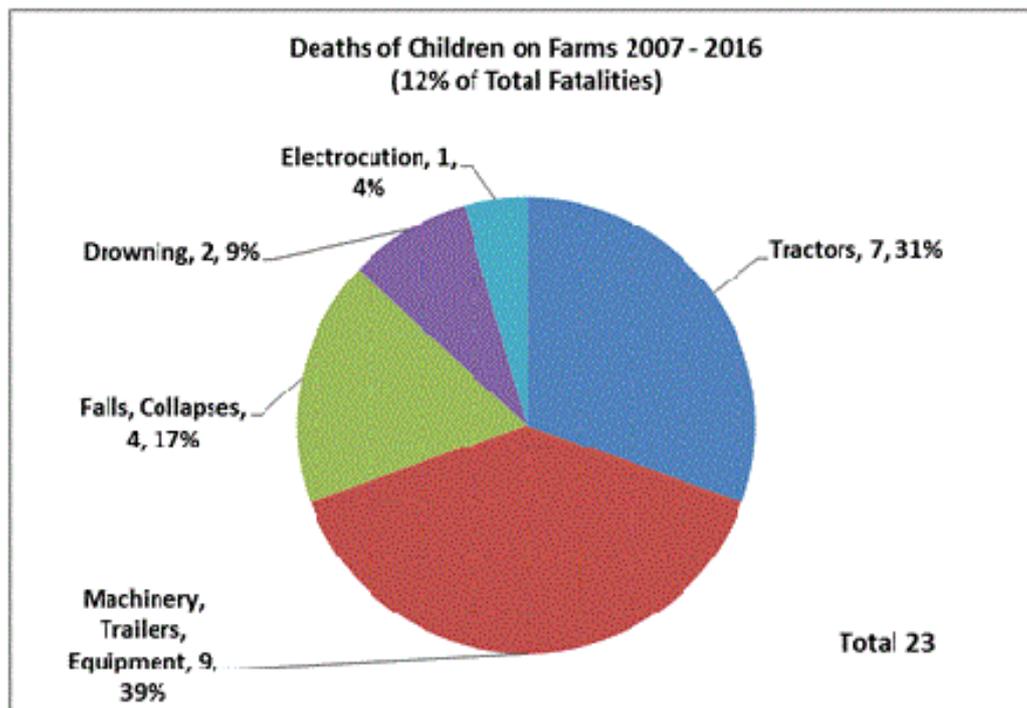
Child safety on farms is a high priority for all key stakeholders involved in **#FarmSafetyWeek** and as the Week came to an end, what topic could be more appropriate than looking to protect the future of farming - its children.

In the first part of this article, several individuals share their experiences and thoughts. The second half provides links to some additional resources and interesting initiatives which many members will not be aware of and are worth exploring and supporting. Please do read to the end – it is worth it!

Sadly, **#FarmSafetyWeek** started with news of an 11-year-old boy being seriously injured in an incident involving a tractor at his family's farm in County Down, Northern Ireland, on Saturday 22 July. He was airlifted to Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, where he remains in a stable condition. This comes after a 4-year-old was killed on a NI farm in April.

[HSENI report](#) that this follows a worrying recent trend in incidents, including fatalities, involving children on Northern Ireland farms. From 2004 to 2013, following significant efforts to reverse a previously dismal record, there was only 1 child fatality on NI farms. But from 2013 to date, tragically there have been 3 child deaths and since the start of 2017 alone, HSENI have seen 1 child death and 2 very serious incidents on farms which could very easily have been fatalities.

In the Republic of Ireland, the statistics make even more grim reading, with 23 children killed in the past 10 years (2007 to 2016). **The Health and Safety Authority (HSA)** has broken these down by cause, as follows:



In GB, HSE's recently released [Fatal Injuries in Agriculture report for 2016-17](#) confirmed that, for the first time in 3 years, a child was amongst the 3 members of the public killed on farms (in England, Scotland and Wales) - bringing the past 5-year total to 4.

HSE's associated [Summary of Agriculture Fatalities 2016-17](#) provides a brief summary of every fatal accident and describes how in this most recent incident, a 3 year old boy suffered fatal head injuries when he was run over by his father as he reversed his telehandler out of a cow shed into the yard area where his son was playing unsupervised.

This prompted Alan Plom (IOSH Rural Industries Group Vice Chair) to recall: "The very first fatality I was involved in investigating at the start of my 32 years in HSE as an HM Agricultural Inspector in 1979, was a 3 year old girl crushed to death when the bulk potato box she was asleep next to was moved forward by the farmers young son, using a fore-end loader - just to save the pickers (which included the little girl's mother) walking a few extra feet.

"Other than the tragic scene in the potato field, what I remember most was the harrowing scenes at the Coroner's Inquest with the youngster's (loudly grieving) Romany Gypsy family dressed in extravagant black 'funeral' clothing. That was truly haunting."

"And in an awful coincidence, the last fatality I investigated personally as an Inspector was a 7-year-old girl who drowned in a grain pit. Her father had removed the metal grid covering the grain pit to clean it but hadn't replaced it before harvest began. This grid had only been fitted a few years previously in response to an Improvement Notice issued by one of my colleagues."

"When I got the call to go to the farm to meet the Police, interview the family and carry out a TV interview, it struck me that this little girl was the same age as my own son. This played on my mind as I drove to the site. These things stick with you and certainly made me even more determined to stop other children and their families suffering."

Alan added: "I am pleased to be able to work each year to promote child safety with Ian Beeby (former Unite the Union/TGWU rep on HSE's Agricultural Industry Advisory Committee). As usual, I represented IOSH Rural Industries Group when we took part in the annual '**Kid's Country**' event.

Over 7,000 children were brought by coach into the East of England Showground in Peterborough, from schools far and wide, to learn where food comes from. We take this opportunity to talk to as many children, teachers and parents as we can, about risks on farms, including from tractors, large grain lorries, etc, moving in farm yards and on the road.

Trying to save a small model figure drowning in a simulated emptying grain bin is always a popular activity with the children, as is using an extinguisher to put out a fire! We can only hope that they remember the experience for the rest of their lives – and that they enjoy a long and healthy one as a result?"







As Stephanie Berkeley from the Farm Safety Foundation (the charity behind **#FarmSafetyWeek**) said: "Unlike other industries, on farms the family home is directly next to the workplace, with children often present. However, farms are the only workplace where children continue to die in what is always a horrific tragedy for families, and heart-breaking for their communities. As a parent of two children I find it disturbing and upsetting to read that any child would lose their life in a workplace environment."

"A farm can be a magical place for children, where independence and responsibility are fostered, and family relationships are strengthened, but it can also be a dangerous place where the unthinkable can happen in a matter of seconds. Growing up on a farm brings both challenges and blessings. It builds character and a solid work ethic and creates an attitude of optimism. We have witnessed events recently in this world that could make me lose faith in humanity, but I am constantly reminded that in our wonderful world of farming, a sense of community and neighbourly love still exists."

A Mother's story

Accidents to children don't always involve machinery, falls or drowning. Jade Lanham who, as a Technician at Easton and Otley College in Suffolk, has made a career from advising, training and supporting new entrants into agriculture, had a recent experience with a 'very young entrant' which has made her question how even she needs to examine her own attitude to farm safety in the future.

It was lambing season, and like all farmers, Jade was up and out early to check on the ewes that were lambing at her home near Acle, Norwich. Jade's three-year-old daughter

Evie, being a very sweet and active little girl, wanted to come outside and help with the feeding and lambing. Something that will be familiar to many farming families.

Jade explained "We had recently had an ewe lamb, and Evie had fallen completely in love with her twin lambs. I was busy watering the other sheep and specifically warned Evie not to move, and to sit on a bale of straw. Like any mum, I believed she would do this. I could hear her talking to the lambs and kept glancing at her to make sure she was okay. Lambing often involves using rubber gloves, syringes, etc, and Evie thought this was great, so she brought her toy doctor's kit to play 'vet'. When I wasn't looking, she hopped off the bale and stood looking at the lambs. I have done this myself many times, but I could see her little mind in overdrive. Evie took the plastic syringe and needle from her doctor's kit to 'give her new patients an injection'."

"Thinking about it now gives me chills as I remember saying: 'No, don't get closer', but she totally ignored me and approached the lamb. Within seconds the ewe charged her, striking her in the solar plexus. Evie was knocked over and cried loudly for some time, but I believe this was more the shock of the ewe knocking her over. Physically she was fine with not a scratch on her.

"It wasn't the ewe's fault." Jade was quick to point out: "She was just protecting her lamb, just as I would have done for Evie and, to be honest, I think she got off lightly as we all know others who have been less fortunate in this situation."

"It really could have been so much worse, we were really fortunate, and Evie got away lightly considering her size, compared with the ewe." Jade concludes: "Since the incident, I am a lot more protective of Evie and make sure she stops where she is meant to. It has made me more nervous about being amongst livestock of all sorts, and I do take a lot of extra care.

"I count my blessings it wasn't worse. However, the unpredictable nature of livestock, no matter how placid the animal, is something that cannot be underestimated. My advice to other farmers is to keep young ones safe. However, determined they are, don't back down and let them do what they want to do with young animals around. All new mothers are very protective and can show a nasty side. Take someone with you if possible and then they can explain to the child what the adult is doing and why it can be dangerous."

According to Guy Smith, Vice President of National Farmers Union (NFU) and Chair of England's Farm Safety Partnership: "Giving children the freedom of the outdoors is something many in the farming community will understandably see the positive side of, but it must be remembered that farms are places of work. Just as it would be inappropriate for children to be found unsupervised in working quarries or in busy factories, so to it is irresponsible to give children access to farms without fully evaluating and managing the risks."



“It is worthwhile ‘zoning’ farmyards in terms of whether children of a certain age should ever be present, or whether they should be supervised or unsupervised.”

“There is nothing more heart-breaking than reading or hearing about a child killed or severely injured in a farm accident. While no one wants to see the end of the family farm there is clearly good and bad practice when it comes to managing the practical difficulties that can arise when homes are so closely located to places of work.

It's clear that by taking good advice and drawing up plans, risks to children can be minimised. All parents and grandparents have a responsibility to take this issue seriously. More generally, farmers should welcome children to farms to introduce them to agriculture - however it must be done with the appropriate level of skilled supervision.”

With schools starting to break up for the holidays soon, the NFU Scotland also warned of the dangers of letting children play on farms during the summer. Working in conjunction with the Farm Safety Partnership Scotland, well-known farmers who have survived accidents on their farms shared the impact this had on their family and business.

Accidents on farm can be life changing, not just for those involved but for their families and workforce too. They can be even more devastating when children are involved, and the plea for this year's summer school holidays is for farmers to take measures to make their farms safer for children.

'Stay safe while working'

NFU Scotland Vice President **Martin Kennedy** commented: “We need the help of farmers, and those working right across the industry, to reduce death and injuries happening on our farms and crofts. Farms can be dangerous places, so it is important that everyone takes the necessary steps to stay safe while working. One death within the industry is far too many, and it is not just the initial impact but the long-term effect it can have on families and on the business.”

“This impact is exacerbated when children are involved. We are pleading with the industry to take measures to make their farms a safer place – create designated spaces, educate children about off-limit areas and make workers aware that children could be on farm and to check their mirrors even more regularly. Simple measures could prevent heartbreak.”

“Most people working within the agricultural industry will be able to recall a close call that could so easily have resulted in serious injury or even fatality. By adopting some simple steps as part of everyday working practices we can reduce the number of accidents and deaths on Scotland's farms.”

NFU Scotland's safety tips

- A farmyard is not a playground so establish rules about what young people can and can't do on the farm.
- Keep children away from farm machinery and moving vehicles.
- Children under 13 years old must not drive or operate tractors or another farm machinery.
- Children under 13 years old must not ride as passengers on tractors, ATVs or another farm machinery.
- Ensure drivers have a clear view of corners and install mirrors to increase visibility if necessary.

- Make sure slurry pits and tanks are securely fenced and inaccessible to prevent children from getting near the area.

Now for Something Completely Different?

Alternative Guidance and Sources of Information

There are many initiatives and films and other media now available to raise awareness of hazards on farms amongst children, their parents and other adults. Alan Plom (RIG Vice Chair) has found some useful alternative sources of guidance and information available in the Northern Ireland and the Republic that few on the 'other side' of the Irish Sea will probably be aware of and urges RIG members to take the time to have a look at these, for their different approaches, ideas and material to use in educating all ages.

In addition to the [HSA's webpage on child safety](#) the excellent [HSA Code of Practice on Preventing Accidents to Children and Young Persons in Agriculture](#) provides vital detailed practical guidance, under-pinned by national legislation. [NB. IOSH Rural Industries Group lobbied to retain GB's equivalent CoP, which was withdrawn a few years ago as part of HSE's review of legislation and guidance.]

Ireland's [Health Service Executive](#) website also has some interesting information and guidance on child safety on farms, including links to relevant legislation and guidance.

[HSENI's article for Farm Safety Week](#) describes the FSPNI's 'SAFE' initiative (Slurry, Animals, Falls and Equipment) and provides a useful checklist for child safety. HSENI also published a useful information leaflet in March last year, aimed at adults, to help keep children safe on the farm: [Avoid harm on the farm - an adult's guide](#).



Also the interesting '[Be Aware Kids](#)' child safety on farms campaign which provides activity packs, worksheets and posters for children and teachers packs, etc. HSENI also have a programme of visits to rural primary schools, rolling over a five-year period, to deliver child safety on farm sessions with the children.

Farm Safety App

During **#FarmSafetyWeek** 2017, the FSP in Northern Ireland was again promoting the 'Farm Secure' App, intended to teach children how to become safer around the farm yard. Available for Android and IOS, the App can also be downloaded from the App store or via the ['Be Aware Kids' webpage](#).

This novel App was developed last year by students at the University of Ulster's School of Nursing and was sponsored by the FSP(NI). It is aimed at Key Stage 1 pupils in P1 to P4 and features videos and an interactive quiz, identifying the dangers that lurk on



farmyards (such as slurry, machinery, farm animals and bugs and germs), advising youngsters on what they should and should not do.

As HSENI's Keith Morrison reiterated on Day 5 of **#FarmSafetyWeek**, "Summer is a particularly dangerous time for children on farms as they're off school and are about the farm more when work activity is running at a very high level - often with contractors on-site operating potentially dangerous vehicles and machinery. The Farm Secure app can help them identify those dangers that lurk on the farmyards and advises them on what they should and should not do when confronted with different situations."

Keith also Chairs the FSP Northern Ireland and said: "Educating children and their families about farm safety remains vitally important, particularly at this busy time of the year. Technology plays an increasingly important role in education and the Farm Secure App provides a really interesting and engaging way for parents and children to learn about the many dangers on farms and how to stay safe all year round."

Children can take a quiz on farm safety and compare their scores with others on the leader-board or watch a number of farm safety videos on issues such as slurry, machinery, farm animals and 'bugs and germs' (sic).

HSENI will also be promoting this app at the start of the new school year to all the rural primary schools as part of their Child Safety on Farms campaign, in conjunction with their extensive other work already undertaken to promote safety for children on farms. Last year, HSENI visited 104 schools and reached over 13,000 pupils with the farm safety message!

Films and Other Media

Many excellent films - for children and adults alike - are available via the HSENI and HSA as well as HSE websites. Some which might be less well-known to embers in GB include the [HSENI You Tube page](#), where children can find various Key Stage 1 videos entitled 'Dangerous Playgrounds' and a Key Stage 2 video entitled 'Farm Safe', which provides more advice and guidance on the farmyard for the various age groups.

The [HSA's 'Farm Safe - Children' film](#) includes practical advice on the application of the **HSA's Code of Practice on Preventing Accidents to Children and Young Persons in Agriculture** and also includes children from farms describing the consequences of various accidents.

Another superb series of films from HSA, 'On The Farm' features a number of very astute and 'farm wise' children describing the range of hazards and precautions on their farms, e.g. [Brady's Story](#) covers PTO shafts, livestock and slurry mixing. This example will take you to the HSA's You Tube page which flags up links to other excellent films in the series. Wise heads on young shoulders indeed!

HSA has also produced a 44 page slide-based booklet for young children, with a story line based around farm dogs: ['Stay safe on the farm with Jessy'](#).

And finally, the [film 'Farm Safety'](#) includes a group of young people introducing the **Yellow Wellies** campaign.

Given that children have accounted for 12% of deaths on farms in the Republic of Ireland, it is perhaps not surprising that stark statistic has spawned several groups from within the farming community, aiming to educate children about farm safety in response to their many tragedies.

For example, [@AgriKid](#), see their website and guidance, as well as [@FarmSafety4Kids](#) (includes information on general safety on the farm, hazards from tractors, animals, water, electricity and fire, Rural Road Safety and First Aid. It also provides a Farm Safety Checklist, links to Farm Safety Apps and Games) and has created a 'Farm Safety Circle'. Both regularly 'Tweet' interesting information, posters, etc, on Twitter. If you are looking for information for young children (or parents!), do check out their websites. The information they provide is relevant wherever you are.

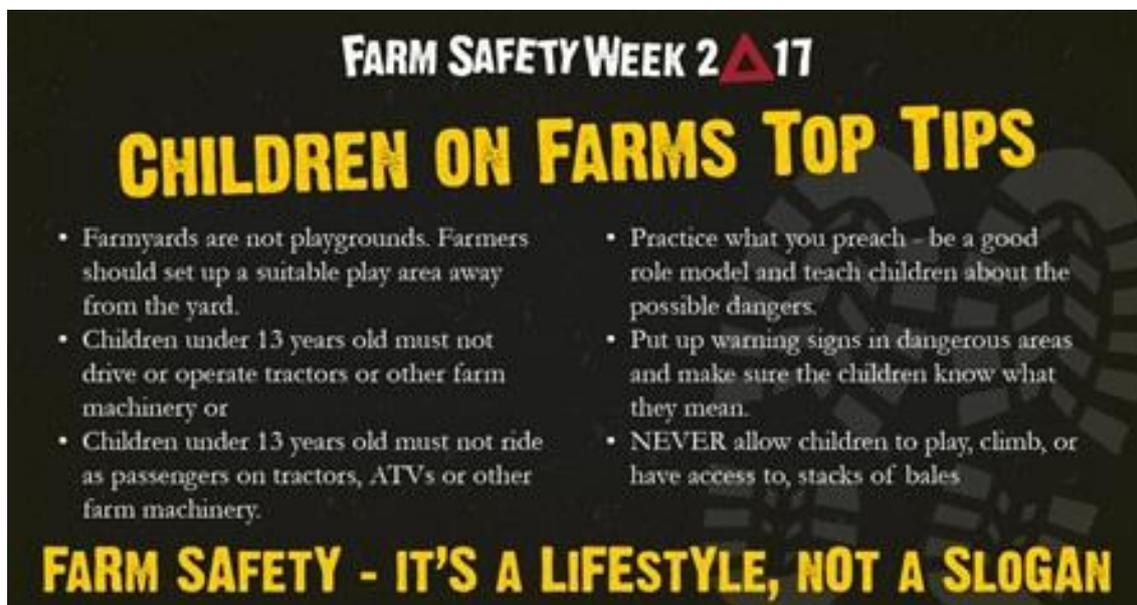
Alan said: "While browsing this rich vein of media, I also discovered this heart-rending film: '[Christmas will never be the same again](#)' in which the father of a 6 year old boy drowned on their family farm tells his heart-breaking story, together with family and their friends, recounting the devastating loss of young James, and urges everyone to be vigilant at all times and to remember that a farmyard is not a playground.

Another poignant and very persuasive [film](#) published by HSENI during last year's **#FarmSafetyWeek** features Wallace Gregg, a former President of the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU), who relates how his 8 year old son James fell out of his tractor door and was run over. Miraculously, he survived, but this story highlights the danger of carrying children in tractor cabs.

Take action now to help keep children safe around the farm.

For more information on Farm Safety Week visit [Yellow Wellies](#) or follow [@yellowwelliesUK](#) on Twitter/Facebook using the hashtag **#FarmSafetyWeek**

Although Friday was the last official day for **#FarmSafetyWeek**, IOSH/Rural Industries Group will be posting further information to read for Day 6 (highlighting Health issues and relevant guidance, including the IOSH No Time to Lose Campaign) and Day 7 (Managing H&S on farms, and dealing with Emergencies. Farming is 24/7 after all!



FARM SAFETY WEEK 2017

CHILDREN ON FARMS TOP TIPS

- Farmyards are not playgrounds. Farmers should set up a suitable play area away from the yard.
- Children under 13 years old must not drive or operate tractors or other farm machinery or
- Children under 13 years old must not ride as passengers on tractors, ATVs or other farm machinery.
- Practice what you preach – be a good role model and teach children about the possible dangers.
- Put up warning signs in dangerous areas and make sure the children know what they mean.
- NEVER allow children to play, climb, or have access to, stacks of bales

FARM SAFETY - IT'S A LIFESTYLE, NOT A SLOGAN

