

Agricultural bike safety

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Agricultural bikes are any motorbikes with two, three and four wheels used for farm work. Three and four wheelers are also known as 'all terrain vehicles' or ATVs.

Facts

- Around 10 deaths associated with ATVs occur each year in Australia, most associated with ATVs used in agriculture and horticulture.
- In Western Australia each year there are around 37 lost time injuries and diseases (LTIDs) involving motorcycles or ATVs on farms. Most agricultural bike injuries result from a lack of training and experience, speed, steep, uneven or unfamiliar ground, carrying a passenger or an unbalanced load, attachments, unsuitable protective clothing and unsafe driving.
- Young people aged between 10 and 24 have a much higher risk of injury.
- Agricultural bike injuries occur mainly to legs, followed by injuries to spine, arms and head.
- Three and four wheeler spills often result in the rider being pinned beneath or rolled on by the vehicle.

Reducing the risk

Owners must understand the risks associated with agricultural bikes and know what safety precautions to take. Employers have a duty of care under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* to make sure that agricultural bikes are safely maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, and that employees riding them are adequately trained and are wearing protective gear.

Assess the risks associated with the terrain and all tasks involving agricultural bikes. Consider the likelihood and possible severity of injuries and develop safe use procedures to reduce these risks.

The following suggestions may assist in reducing risks of agricultural bike related injuries or harm to health.

General safety tips

- Agricultural bikes should be operated in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.
- Agricultural bikes are not designed to carry passengers.
- Never allow children to operate an agricultural bike.
- Always have a system for restraining items being carried on ATVs.

- Never attempt jumps, wheelies or other stunts on an agricultural bike.
- Ride at an appropriate speed for the terrain, experience and the visibility conditions.

Bike manual and maintenance

- Read and understand the operator's manual, particularly safety information.
- Heed all warning labels on the bike.
- Pay attention to maintenance advice in the manual.
- Be familiar with the capabilities of the bike.
- Check the bike before riding it.
- Check brakes and tyres regularly.
- Make sure all parts used to repair the bike are designed for use on the particular brand of bike.

Personal protective equipment

- Always wear an approved helmet when riding an agricultural bike.
- Wear clothing with long sleeves and pants, sturdy boots and gloves to provide protection if you come off your bike.
- Wear eye protection to reduce the risk of serious eye injuries from bugs, branches or stones.

Attachments

- Take extra care when using attachments such as spray tanks and other equipment on an agricultural bike as they can change the centre of gravity and affect the stability of the bike.
- Make sure attachments are designed for use on the agricultural bike.

Terrain

- Be on the lookout for potential hazards when riding. Rocks, bumps, irrigation pipes, fences and wildlife all have the potential to cause an accident, and should be approached with caution.
- Take extra care when operating agricultural bikes on unfamiliar or rough terrain.
- Where possible, use familiar farm tracks.
- Be particularly careful when turning, approaching a rise or navigating an obstacle. Find another route or go back if not sure of your ability to clear an obstacle.
- Make sure hazard areas are out of bounds.

Paved surfaces and public roads

- Don't drive an ATV on paved or bitumen surfaces. It is not intended for use on smooth surfaces and could be difficult to control.
- Never ride an agricultural bike on public roads.

Drugs, alcohol and fatigue

- Never ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs. They may affect balance, vision, judgement and concentration.
- Fatigue can also limit the ability to control an agricultural bike safely.
- When travelling long distances take frequent rest breaks.

There may be other dangers from using agricultural bikes on your farm. You can make your farm safe by:

- walking around the farm and looking at every job involving agricultural bikes;
- listing what could go wrong to cause an injury or illness;
- thinking about ways of preventing it; and
- doing something about it.

