

**(EMBARGO - UNTIL 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2010)**

**Background information - child farm safety**

A recent update on farm fatalities for the 2003-2006 period by Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety (ACAHS), has indicated that:

- A total of 62 children were fatally injured on Australian farms between 2003 -2006, representing 18% of all farm injury deaths. Two-thirds were male. Around a third of all child deaths were visitors to the farm.
- Drowning was the main cause of death to children on farms, claiming the lives of 25 children, or 40% of all child farm deaths. Farm dams alone were responsible for 13 drowning incidents.



- Children under five years accounted for three-quarters of children who drowned on farms. Apart from dams, younger children also drowned in creeks, troughs, dips and channels.
- Toddlers often wandered away from the home un-noticed.
- Less children drowned in farm dams from 2003-2006 (13) compared to the early nineties (dams claimed the lives of 33 children between 1989-92).
- After drowning, quad bikes and farm vehicles were each responsible for 13% of child deaths on farms from 2003-2006.
  - Quad bikes (riders and passengers) - 1/3 were under 5yrs
  - Farm vehicles (cars-utes) - 1/2 were under 5yrs
- Four times as many children were killed off quad bikes than 2 wheel motorbikes on farms. Research suggests this is because riders / passengers are more likely to be pinned under an upturned quad bike, sustaining chest or abdominal crush injuries.

**Farmsafe Australia - Child Safety on Farms Key Recommendations:**

- Have a securely fenced house yard to help prevent unsupervised access to farm hazards such as dams and farm vehicles; and ensure young children stay in this safe play area unless an adult is available to take them out on the farm and closely supervise them.
- Always ensure children wear seatbelts in cars, utes and trucks
- Do not allow children to ride on tractors, quad bikes or on the back of utes
- Always ensure children wear helmets riding farm bikes and horses

## Drowning prevention and young children...

Having a securely fenced house yard or “safe play area” with child-resistant gates and latches, is a key recommendation for preventing toddlers drowning on farms – endorsed by the Australian Water Safety Plan and major water safety agencies such as RLSSA, Kids Alive and Kidsafe.

Recent research from ACAHS indicates that only around one-half of farms have a fenced house yard secure enough to prevent a toddler wandering away without an adult. This proportion is even less in some regions.



A fenced house yard or safe play area, helps make supervision that much easier. The idea is to provide an access barrier between toddlers and farm hazards – much like a pool fence does, but in reverse. Whilst not always possible, it is good to aim toward pool standard (AS 1926.1 – 2007).

The principle is to make it difficult for young children to leave the house yard without an adult. Fences themselves need to be resistant to a child climbing through or over them (eg. solid or vertical rail, no footholes, 1.2 -1.5 m high, low ground clearance.

All family members and visitors need to be alert to keep the area secure as well (eg. ensure gates are kept closed). Having an interesting yard with play items such as sandpits and open-areas for ball play, can help as well.



Supervision needs to be close and active enough for a toddler to “hold my hand” when out and about on the farm. This is consistent with the advice of major early childhood and water safety agencies.

Still check for other water hazards near the home and eliminate access to these where possible. This might include covering old tanks and dips, placing mesh in water troughs – and fencing backyard pools. In addition, teaching your children to swim and learning resuscitation skills are water safety essentials.

The following resources on child farm safety are available at [www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au) or call ACAHS on 02 6752 5297 for further information.

- *Child safety on farms* checklist
- *Safe Play Areas on Farms* pamphlet, booklet, DVD
- *Child safety on farms* Guideline
- *RIPPER II* primary schools resource