

FARM Safety & Health

For parents of young farmers

People who live in cities, exurbs or suburbs may not come across farms very frequently. But millions of people, including children, still live on farms. In fact, in 2009 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted that more than one million children under the age of 20 lived, worked or had a regular presence on farms in the United States.

Protecting children from injury on farms, especially those who per-

form work on farms, is of paramount importance. The American Society of Safety Engineers offers the following safety tips to parents of children who will be spending time on farms.

- Know and obey the laws. Various state and federal laws are in place to protect young children from farm-related accidents and injuries. Age requirements dictate which jobs children can perform on a farm, and parents should adhere to

those requirements. Asking children to do more than they're physically capable of can lead to accident, injury or even death.

- Review equipment operation instructions. Before assigning children a task on the farm, parents should review the equipment operation instructions. Doing so can help parents reacquire themselves with tools and equipment they may not have used in awhile, and that can make it easier for

them to teach kids how to use such equipment. In addition, reviewing equipment instructions may provide insight to parents unsure if their children are old enough to use certain tools.

- Inspect equipment. Before children perform any tasks on the farm, parents should inspect the equipment their children are likely to use to make sure each tool is safe. Make sure tools are in proper working order, as broken or poorly working

equipment increases the risk of accident or injury.

- Enroll children in farm safety camps. The ASSE recommends that parents contact their local Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau offices to enroll children in farm safety camps. Such camps can teach kids safe farming techniques and the proper ways to use age-appropriate tools.

- Set a positive example. Another way for parents to protect their children on the farm is to set

a positive example. Parents can do so in various ways. Using equipment properly, removing tractor keys from ignitions when tractors are not in use and exercising caution when using hazardous materials shows kids the importance of caution when working on farms.

Hundreds of thousands of children perform jobs on farms across the country. Parents who want to teach their kids to farm should always do so with safety in mind.

How to support local agriculture this fall

The global pandemic that has upended daily life has exacted a toll on many industries. Businesses have been asked to close or temporarily scale back operations, while organizers of recreational gatherings have been tasked with reevaluating the practi-

cality and safety of annual events.

Throughout the United States and Canada, autumn fairs, exhibitions and activities provide revenue for many people. But due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, many of these annual events have been

postponed, adversely affecting local agricultural industries as a result. Governments in certain places have responded to the cancellations and offered assistance to local farmers and agricultural industries. For example, the Province of Ontario is providing nearly \$1

million to assist organizations that had to cancel fall events due to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to supporting such efforts, the general public can pitch in to help offset some of the financial losses accrued by local farms.

- Check for virtual events. Some fall fairs or livestock events have been moved to the digital realm. That means competitors who were entering livestock or even home crafts into competitions can still participate. Organizers may ask for videos or photos of entries and then a committee will vote on the winners. This is one way to keep entry fees and even cash prizes moving along.

- Support local farms

or orchards. Fall is harvest season in many areas, making this a popular time of year to visit nearby farms and to purchase fruits and vegetables directly from the source. Many farms have implemented safety protocols that align with COVID-19 health recommendations to safely welcome visitors. Things may look a little differently at orchards and farms, but smaller crowds and wearing masks should not compromise the fun of picking your own foods.

- Explore farm-to-table. Private individuals as well as restaurant owners can develop relationships with area agriculture producers to increase the availability of farm-to-table offer-

ings. Restaurants can revamp menus to include a greater share of items sourced from nearby farms. Individuals also can rely on produce stands and farmers' markets to stock their pantries. Some farms may offer delivery and mail-order as well.

- Offer financial services. Financial advisors can help farmers who are struggling with finances work through their options. Institutions may be able to extend the terms of loan repayments, refinance loans, restructure debt, or get credit extensions. Lower interest rates have created some new opportunities farmers may not be aware of. Financial advisors can help farmers navigate an uncertain financial time.

Farmers and agricultural organizations are facing greater challenges as fall fairs and other events are being canceled. The public can support agriculture in different ways to offset the financial losses stemming from the pandemic.

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