

Preventing accidents to children on farms



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Introduction

Agriculture has one of the highest fatal injury rates of any industry in Great Britain, but is the only high-risk industry that has to deal with the constant presence of children. Farms are homes as well as workplaces, and visitors, including children, may also be present on farms.

Children and young people up to the age of 18 are regularly killed and injured on farms, either because they are working on the farm or because they are playing there.

The ways in which children are killed varies little from year to year. The most common causes of death and major injury in the last decade were:

- falling from vehicles;
- being struck by moving vehicles or objects;
- contact with machinery;
- driving vehicles;
- falls from height;
- drowning and asphyxiation;
- poisoning;
- fire;
- contact with animals.

The children who died were:

- being carried as passengers on agricultural plant and machinery;
- not under proper adult supervision;
- working/helping around the farm;
- playing unsupervised; or
- trespassing.

For the main risk areas, this leaflet:

- provides practical guidance on how to reduce the risk of injury to children under 13 and older children below minimum school leaving age (usually 16);
- identifies tasks and operations that are too hazardous for children and young people to do and includes examples of incidents from real life – often involving a parent or grandparent killing their child.

Children under the age of 13

Remember that, although parents are responsible for preventing their children straying or trespassing into areas where they may be at risk, all adults working in agriculture – employers, employees, contractors, or other visiting workers – must take responsibility for child safety.

Identify what might put children at risk

A 3-year-old boy was playing in the farmyard. A metal gate was propped against a workshop wall waiting for hinges to be fitted. The boy climbed up the rungs of the gate and it fell and crushed him.

You can become blind to risks you see every day. There can be risks to children that aren't risks to adults, such as an old gate left propped against a wall. When you are deciding what may cause harm to children, it may help to ask a safety representative, an employee, a friend or a neighbour to have a look at your farm – it's amazing what hazards and risks fresh eyes will see. Remember it is your duty to control and manage any hazards and risks identified.

You should also look at the fixed hazards in your farmyard, outbuildings and stores. These will include, for example, hung and freestanding gates, fixed and portable ladders, sheep-dip baths, slurry lagoons, grain silos, feed stores, propped machinery, machinery being maintained, cattle crushes, loft storage areas, silage clamps, barns, cattle stalls and glasshouses. Remember too that many accidents to children on farms involve moving vehicles.

Then run through your work year to identify the range of hazards that can arise, eg silaging, grain hauling and similar peak farm activity often coincides with the school holidays. For simple and practical guidance on assessing the risks on your farm and what you need to do to control them visit www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/risk-assessment.htm.

Can children carry out simple tasks on the farm?

Egg collection, for example, is often thought to be a safe and easy activity to allow children to do alone, but there may be dangers you have not thought about.

You still need to question what a task actually involves. For example:

- Where hens are allowed to nest freely about the farm, where may children have to go to look for eggs?
- Will they need to climb up somewhere two-handed and climb down one-handed?
- Will they need to cross working areas where there are vehicle movements?
- Will they need to enter animal pens?
- Are younger children adequately supervised?

A 2-year-old boy was feeding hens with his mother, but he slipped away. She heard his voice coming from the chicken shed where he had gone to collect some eggs. He climbed onto the laying boxes which collapsed onto his chest.

Have you thought about everything which may cause significant harm?

Take the following points into account:

- Are there children living on or near the farm?
- What arrangements can you make for children to be looked after if parents or guardians are not available, eg because they are working in the field away from their children?
- What activities or tasks on your farm might put them at risk?

- What work equipment do you use, such as machinery. Does the operator have clear vision around the machinery or from the driver's cab? Could you see a small child standing behind your vehicle?
- What risks are there from the layout of the workplace, such as blind corners or slurry lagoons?
- What areas on the farm might be especially attractive to children, such as bale stacks or animal pens?
- What are the risks from hazardous substances such as bacteria and chemicals?
- How do you organise and control work activities, including the age and responsibility of other workers? Do you use contractors, who may not be familiar with the risks on your farm?
- Do children visit by invitation (eg to see friends or as a school party) or uninvited (eg exercising legal rights of access or as trespassers)?

Remember that children have only a limited awareness of risks and that may be both physically and mentally immature.

Manage the risks

Are there children living on or near the farm?

If there are:

- provide a securely fenced play area with enough activities to keep children busy;
- keep children away from farming activities and work traffic where possible;
- make sure everyone working on the farm knows that they should stop work immediately if an unsupervised child suddenly appears in the work area and take the child somewhere safe;
- if the children are old enough, tell them about the dangers they should look out for and where they are not allowed to go;
- put up warning signs in dangerous areas and make sure the children know what they mean.

If you use contractors who are unfamiliar with your workplace:

- give them clear instructions about stopping work and making the area safe if unauthorised young people and children enter the work area;
- ensure you have agreed with them the working areas and the steps to take to prevent unauthorised access by children;
- tell them what to do to ensure the safe return of children to the control of an appropriate adult;
- consider any language or cultural barriers when using migrant workers – they may not see the presence of children as a risk.

Can I take my children to work with me?

Childcare arrangements are difficult to organise for many parents. However tempting it may seem, taking them to work with you is not the solution. For example, it is illegal to carry children under the age of 13 in tractor cabs, but some parents still break the law. It is never safe to have a child in the cab.

In most years, farming work will lead to the death of at least one child at the hands of their own parent or a close family member. Most children under five who are killed in farm accidents are with an adult at the time. It is very difficult to supervise children, especially toddlers, when doing work that requires your close attention.



Driven by mum: A 2-year-old died after falling out of the back window of a tractor.

Driven by dad: A 4-year-old had been riding in the cab when her mother arrived in the field to take her home. As the girl went to join her mother, her father drove off and ran her over, killing her.

Driven by grandad: A 5-year-old fell out of the tractor door and was run over by a roller. The child had critical injuries but survived.

Driven by big sister: She got down to sort out livestock, leaving the keys in the ignition and the engine running. A 3-year-old left in the cab decided to get down too and died when becoming entangled in an unguarded power take-off (PTO) shaft.

What about learning through experience?

Health and safety regulation does not prevent learning through experience. It can be undertaken in a planned way with direct supervision. There is nothing wrong with a child watching what you do as long as:

- the task itself is not inherently dangerous;
- the person doing the task is not the same person supervising the child; and
- the child is kept in a safe place.

When children are left to their own devices, provide a safe area or garden for them to play in. Farmyards are workplaces not playgrounds.

Vehicles and machinery

These present the greatest risk to children and are probably the areas of farm life most attractive to older children. The following are risks for which there are specific legal duties.

Prohibition on driving vehicles and machines

It is illegal to allow a child under 13 to ride on or drive agricultural self-propelled machines (such as tractors) and other specified farm machinery while it is being used in the course of agricultural operations or is going to or from the site of such operations.

Prohibition on children riding on machines, vehicles or implements

It is illegal to allow a child under 13 years old to be carried on a tractor, self-propelled agricultural machine, or a machine or implement mounted on, towed or propelled by a tractor or other vehicle, including a machine or agricultural implement pulled by an animal, usually a horse.

Children are not safe simply because they are in a cab – they can and do fall from cabs through doors which open accidentally, rear windows, or during emergencies. When they get out of the cab they are vulnerable to being run over by the machine as it moves off. Children can also present a risk to operators when they leave the driving position (eg to open gates) by working controls such as parking brakes, hydraulic levers etc, and they can distract the operator's attention in an emergency.

A young girl fell out of a tractor cab as it drove on the road. The tractor went over a bump, causing her to lose her balance, strike the door handle and fall through the opening door. She needed 30 stitches in her head, fractured her pelvis, punctured her bladder and was temporarily paralysed.

An 8-year-old boy was being carried in his father's tractor cab along a farm track. The upper section of the cab door was secured but the catch to the lower section was missing. The boy was standing in the nearside foot well when the door opened unexpectedly and he fell under the rear wheel.

An 8-year-old boy and his two brothers were passengers in a tractor driven by their father. The tractor was towing a water ballasted roller. The boy fell from the tractor and received fatal head injuries when he was run over by the roller.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs or quad bikes) are considered to be self-propelled agricultural machines when they are used in agricultural operations. **It is therefore illegal for them to be driven for work by children under the age of 13. It is also illegal to carry a child as a passenger.** Look at the 'All-terrain vehicles' section later in this leaflet and HSE information sheet AIS33 for more information (see 'Find out more').



A 12-year-old boy drove an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). He swerved to avoid a ditch and the ATV toppled over. He fell off, was trapped beneath the vehicle and drowned in the ditch. The brakes were later found to be faulty.

A 5-year-old boy was sitting between his father's legs on an ATV. Travelling up a steep hill, the ATV hit a rabbit hole and both father and son were thrown from the vehicle. They were not wearing head protection. The father needed stitches to a head wound. The child's skull was fractured.

Riding on trailers

Children under 13 years old may only 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. You should adopt the same standards of protection if you carry older children.

Suitable edge protection would comprise solid headboards, tailboards and sides at least 920 mm high, or guard rails. If guard rails are used they should:

- be between 920 mm and 1070 mm high;
- have an intermediate rail between 460 mm and 535 mm high; and
- have a toe board at least 75 mm high.

The guard rails may have movable or opening sections for access, but these should be closed when the trailer is moving, and should give the same degree of protection as the rest of the guard rails. Consider infilling the guard rails where a trailer is used for preschool children riding with casual workers or school children on tour.

Only carry unsupervised children if you and the driver are confident that they will obey instructions to remain seated. If children are expected to ride on a load then any sides must be higher than that load. To be effective they should provide the same standard of protection as the measurements given above.

Never allow a child to:

- ride on the drawbar of a tractor or trailer;
- ride on a trailer when materials are being loaded onto it and the trailer is in motion.

HSE produces a free information sheet (AIS36) on carrying passengers on farm trailers (see 'Find out more').

Several children were being carried on a bale trailer. One was sitting with his legs dangling over the side of the trailer, and as it went through a gateway, one leg was crushed between the gatepost and the trailer.

A schoolboy was riding on the drawbar of a tractor/trailer combination when he fell off and was run over by the trailer nearside wheel. He died of internal injuries.

HSE will enforce the law relating to child safety vigorously and will consider proceedings against anyone found breaking it. The law does not exempt parents and other relatives.

Moving vehicles

Mixing vehicles and people is always a risk because of blind spots. Children are at particular risk because they may not be seen at all unless they are far away from the vehicle, eg from a telehandler a small child may not be seen if the boom is in its normal transport position. Many children are too small to be seen from a tractor cab if they are standing near to the tyres.

Remember to think about additional blind spots that may be created when you add on equipment. Would a carefully placed mirror help you see round the corner? Can you restrict pedestrian access? At busy times would a clear one-way system help?

Control the risks:

- Always use the **Safe Stop** procedure when leaving a vehicle unattended, ie apply the parking brake, lower mounted equipment to the ground, stop the engine, remove the starting key and lock or otherwise secure the tractor.
- Reduce vehicle movements, consider speed limits and avoid blind reversing by using a competent banksman or guide.
- Remind drivers to make sure they can stop within the distance they can see to be clear – especially important around corners or when approaching obstructions.
- Put up signs reminding drivers that children may be nearby and they should drive accordingly, and check that children are not in the area before getting into the vehicle.

A 5-year-old boy was killed when crushed under the wheels of a reversing vehicle. He was playing with other children in a farmyard, from which he was banned. The driver did not see the boy, even though he had been careful and observant and had used his reversing mirrors properly.

Contact with machinery

It is illegal to allow a child under 13 years old to operate most farm machinery.

Children between 13 and 16 can safely use some machines, but only if they are properly trained, supervised and competent. See 'Children between 13 and 16' later in this leaflet for more information.

Children are attracted to machinery and often fail to appreciate the dangers involved. Agricultural machinery that is used without anyone in attendance is therefore a particular risk. Keep unaccompanied children away from farm activities, and make sure that:

- all machinery is properly guarded;
- you do not allow children to help you – a moment's lack of attention can result in tragedy;
- you do not leave a child in, on, or near machinery, including tractors etc.

A 9-year-old boy was pulled feet first into a forage harvester, losing a leg. He had been left unsupervised near the stationary machine which was left running.

Falls

Children are naturally curious and adventurous, which often leads them to climb to the upper levels of buildings and high structures such as silos and bale stacks, or just to climb ladders through bravado. They also go into normally out-of-bounds areas when toys such as balls are lost. They may be injured or killed, eg when the structure gives way, when they cannot climb down as easily as they climbed up, or when they climb through or along guard rails provided for adults. Roofs which are normally inaccessible may be easily climbed on when, for example, the adjacent silage clamp is full.

An 8-year-old boy was playing with a farmer's son on the farm. For some reason they climbed onto the calf-shed roof, and the boy fell 3.5 m through a plastic roof-light. He died from a fractured skull.

Think about how you can stop children getting onto these structures. Consider:

- making fixed ladders inaccessible by blanking the rungs (eg by securing a scaffolding plank across them);
- removing portable ladders (including any removable lower section of a fixed ladder) so that they cannot be used to get into dangerous areas;
- storing portable ladders so that they are chained/secured to prevent unauthorised use;
- stacking bales, pallets etc so that children cannot climb up to otherwise inaccessible structures;
- locking or otherwise securing buildings with high machines or equipment in them.

If a bale stack can be climbed, the key risks to consider are:

- falling from and through the bale stack;
- the stack may be used to access other areas;
- crushing by falling bales;
- small bales used to make dens which may collapse;
- fire – consider ignition sources.

An 8-year-old girl was playing on the farm bale stack, and when trying to climb down she fell about 3.5 m onto a hay tedder below. She died from severe head injuries.

Falling objects

When you do your risk assessment, look out for things around the farm that could fall on to children. Remember that children can be killed or injured by objects that might not cause serious harm to adults.

Take the following steps:

- Secure, or lay flat, heavy items of machinery and equipment that could fall, so that they cannot fall and injure children. Pay special attention to gates, ladders and wheels.
- Where stacks of bales, pallets or timber are stored, take precautions to prevent children climbing on them. If fencing is impractical, eg for a wood stack, build the stack, or use retention posts, so it will not collapse.

A 4-year-old boy was killed when a tractor dual wheel weighing 460 kg fell on him. The wheel was leaning unsecured against the wall of a barn.

A 6-year-old farmer's son climbed onto a gate that had been removed from its hinges. It overbalanced and fell on him, fracturing his skull and killing him. The farmer knew the gate was unsecured and that the boy was playing near it.

Drowning and asphyxiation

Many child deaths on farms result from drowning in water, slurry or grain when children get into areas such as:

- grain stores, silos, hoppers or pits;
- slurry stores or effluent tanks;
- irrigation reservoirs;
- sheep dips.

As part of your risk assessment, try to put yourself in the position of a child. What would attract them to an area? Is it likely to feature in a game? Are there other reasons why they would go there? Do not:

- underestimate the ability of children to get into seemingly inaccessible places;
- underestimate their curiosity;
- assume that because you would not wish to enter an area it would not be attractive to a child.



An 8-year-old boy was playing on the grain in the intake pit of a grain store when he was pulled down into it and asphyxiated. The pit was not fitted with a grid.

A 7-year-old girl was playing on her own in the farmyard near an uncovered full grain pit which was being emptied by an auger. The child fell into the pit and was drowned in the grain. She was dead when she was discovered.

A 1-year-old boy was playing with his brothers in a fenced area. He left the safe area, went into the farmyard and through an open doorway into a shed. He fell into a sheep dip bath which had been used earlier that morning. One of the covers had been left off and the boy drowned.

A 9-year-old boy was suffocated in grass in a silage clamp on his father's farm. He was playing near the clamp and helping by opening the trailer tailgate. Despite being told to move away by his father, he continued to play in the area and was buried by the grass.

To prevent such incidents you must stop children entering hazardous areas. Consider the following precautions:

- Securely fence all lagoons, reservoirs etc with a child-deterrent fence to a height of 1.3 m. Don't forget gates or other access points.
- Securely cover all pits (eg grain pits and sheep dips) and manholes to prevent children falling into them. Grids with a maximum spacing of 65 mm are suitable.
- Keep entrances to buildings containing silos, grain bins etc locked, except when work is going on.

Injury and ill health from animals

Animals do not need to be aggressive to cause serious harm to, or even kill, a child. The dangers of mature cattle and horses are obvious, but sheep or pigs have caused serious injury, often when apparently playful.

The best way of reducing the risk from animals is to keep children away from them, or to allow contact only when they are **directly supervised by an adult**. If you take young children to see animals in the field make sure that they stay close to you and do not wander off among the animals.

Although there are good educational and developmental reasons for encouraging children to have contact with animals, never allow children, even when with an adult, to enter pens or loose housing containing:

- any bull, boar, stallion, ram or stag;
- cows, sows, mares, does or ewes that have newborn young with them;
- any other animal that is known or likely to be aggressive.

Children may be allowed to enter pens with docile female animals without young as long as they are directly supervised by an adult. If you want to show children young animals, make sure that both the animal and the child are outside the pen, or secure or remove the mother from the pen.

Keep children out of milking parlours unless they are directly supervised.

A 5-year-old farmer's son was helping to bring a cow and calf from the fields to the yard. He was knocked to the ground by the cow, which stood on his hand causing him to lose part of his thumb.

Animals can also carry diseases or organisms that can be passed to humans and cause illness (zoonoses). These include E. coli 0157, which may cause serious diarrhoea or worse, cryptosporidium which may also cause diarrhoea, orf, which causes skin lesions, Q fever, which causes flu-like symptoms and others. Farms and grain stores often attract vermin. Rats can cause illnesses such as leptospirosis.

To limit the risk of children being affected by these diseases, make sure they do not:

- contact any animal obviously suffering from illness or infection such as scouring, orf or ringworm;
- put unwashed fingers in their mouths;
- eat or drink during or after contact with animals, faeces, or areas which animals have soiled until they have washed their hands thoroughly with soap and clean running water, using a clean paper or roller towel to dry them.

Thirteen children were treated in hospital after an open farm visit and handling livestock that carried the E. coli 0157 bacteria. They had sucked their fingers and eaten packed lunches without first washing their hands.

Hazardous substances

Hazardous substances in agriculture range from pesticides and veterinary medicines, including sheep dips, to dairy chemicals and workshop degreasers. All these substances should be securely locked away at all times unless they are being used under supervision.

Never:

- leave an unattended pesticide store open or unlocked;
- leave concentrated pesticide in any container other than the original;
- put diluted pesticide into any container that could be mistaken to contain any other liquid, such as a soft drink;
- leave any sheep dip containing dipwash uncovered after use – if a child falls in, as well as the risk of drowning, there is a risk of swallowing the dipwash or absorbing it through their skin;
- allow children to help treat an animal using hypodermic syringes.

As well as man-made hazards, there are natural hazardous substances on the farm such as micro-organisms (bacteria etc) present in manures, slurry, dusts and soil. Always make sure children wash their hands thoroughly before eating or drinking. Do not allow young children to play where they are likely to touch slurry etc if they do not understand the need to keep their fingers out of their mouths.

A 7-year-old girl was taken to hospital after drinking diluted pesticide from an unlabelled soft-drink bottle. She recovered after treatment.

A young boy was taken to hospital after playing in an old store shed where sheep dip had spilt onto the shelves, floor and items stored in it. The shed had no door.

Fire

Children often make dens in or on stacks of hay or straw, and sometimes take matches or candles with them. In some cases there have been multiple deaths as a result of a fire in a bale stack.



Check for evidence of children playing in or burrowing under stacks. If you see signs of this, fence off the area, or contact the parents and ask them to keep their children away to prevent it from happening again.

Children may also be at risk if asked or allowed to build bonfires on the farm. They may not realise that flammable liquids should never be used to light or refresh a bonfire and may get too close or be caught unawares by the fire suddenly flaming. Do not allow children to help with bonfires, and always make sure they are completely extinguished before leaving them.

A 14-year-old boy was found dead in a straw barn. He had been playing with candles in the bales.

A 13-year-old girl was one of a group of trespassing teenagers who were playing in a large Dutch barn which was being used to store bales of straw. The farmer did not know they were there. It seems the girl lost something and used a lighted candle to look for it. The straw caught fire and she could not escape.

Visitors to the farm

More and more farms are diversifying and opening to visitors. Farms that open regularly should consider permanent arrangements and an accreditation course such as the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS) (see www.face-online.org.uk/cevas).

Organised tours such as school visits should have their own health and safety arrangements. Make the organisers aware of your farm health and safety rules and any no-go areas. Co-operation between visitors and the host farmer will ensure a successful visit. Guidance is available for teachers about managing farm visits (see 'Find out more').

Farms that open only occasionally (such as for Open Farm Sunday) should use the advice given in this leaflet as a minimum, and tell visitors that they must adhere to your safety instructions throughout the visit.

If you have properly assessed areas of your farm as safe for your children to play in, they may be safe for visitors. But remember that visitors and relatives are often more excited about seeing new things and can venture into places normally left unexplored by your own children – so check your assessment takes account of this.

When ANY child is allowed to enter the farm workplace, they will need direct supervision.

'Right to roam'

If there is a right of way that passes through the farmyard, you need to clearly mark a safe access route or make people aware of the risks in some other way.

Right to roam and general public access matters are not covered in this leaflet, but are dealt with by the countryside agencies in England, Wales and Scotland. A contact website address is in 'Find out more'.

Trespass

The law relating to trespass is enforced by the police, not HSE. You may wish to speak to your community police officer for advice. If you know that children and young people are trespassing you should consider how to minimise any risks and how you can prevent access to your workplace:

- Provide suitable, robust and well-maintained fences, gates and warning signs to deter access.
- Watch out for children trespassing and tell them to leave. If they will not, stop work and call their parents or the police.
- Report persistent offenders to their parents (if known) and the police.

Two teenage boys made a regular meeting point in a barn: they died in a fire. One of the boys lived locally and had trespassed before. HSE's investigation showed that reasonable steps had been taken to try and keep them out and no action was taken against the farmer.

Children between 13 and 16

The Prevention of Accidents to Children Regulations 1999 prevent any child under 13 years old from driving a tractor or other agricultural vehicle.

Young people over 13 years old are allowed to drive a tractor or other agricultural vehicle at work but before doing so should attend a training course run by a competent training provider. Whether at work or not, no young person should be permitted to drive a tractor or self-propelled machine unless:

- they have the reach and strength to operate the controls with ease while sitting in the driving seat;
- they have been instructed in safely operating the tractor etc they are driving and fully understand what all the controls do, and what might happen if they are improperly used;
- they are closely supervised by a responsible adult;
- no other child or young person is on the tractor etc, and no other person is on any trailer or other equipment attached, other than to supervise or instruct and no members of the public, for example those present for a farm open day, are in the immediate vicinity;
- the controls for the PTO, hydraulic devices and engine stopping are clearly marked to show what they are for, and the tractor is maintained so it is safe for them to operate;
- there are no steep slopes, excavations, river banks, lake or pond edges, deep ditches or similar in the driving area.

Properly trained, instructed and supervised children between 13 and 16 can safely use some agricultural machines for straightforward tasks. Machines and operations that may be suitable include:

- using a low-powered tractor with trailed roller or harrows on level grassland with no ditches;
- operating a pedestrian-controlled motorised slurry or manure scraper; and working on the inspection grading platform of a potato harvester (not in the driving position).

However, there is a range of machines that they should not be allowed to:

- drive;
- operate or help to operate;
- maintain or clean (unless the machine and its component parts are stationary, isolated and the keys removed);

including:

- towed or self-propelled harvesters and processing machines (except machines designed for operation by people as well as the driver, where the child of 13 to 16 is on the operating platform and under the supervision of an adult);
- trailers and towed machinery with built in conveying, loading or spreading mechanisms;
- powered cultivators of any sort or power-driven machines with cutting, splitting, grinding or crushing mechanisms (including chainsaws);
- chemical applicators of any sort, including hand-held equipment;
- ditching and drainage machinery;
- materials handlers including skid steer loaders, lift trucks and track-laying vehicles;
- powered grain or slurry-carrying machinery;
- powered feed-preparation equipment.

A 14-year-old tractor driver lost control of the tractor when driving over potholes. It collided with another machine and overturned, breaking his leg and causing head injuries.

A 14-year-old boy was driving a tractor and had a 16-year-old friend with him. The friend got out and his leg was run over by a powered cultivator. His leg had to be amputated.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs)

Where children and young people are operating ATVs for work, follow these rules:

- Allow children over 13 to ride only ATVs of an appropriate size and power, after formal training on a low-power ATV.
- **Check and adhere to the manufacturer's minimum age recommendations for your ATV – many have a minimum age of 16 years.**
- Check that the ratio of a child's weight to that of the ATV is appropriate, as weight transfer is the key to safe handling.
- Always refer to the owner's manual and warning labels on the machine.
- Never carry child passengers. It is illegal.
- Sit-astride ATVs are not designed to carry passengers of any age and this will reduce your ability to control the ATV.

Risk assessment will indicate the requirement to wear a suitable helmet when operating an ATV at work. The broader duties and responsibilities for the safe operation of ATVs are covered in HSE information sheet AIS33 (see 'Find out more').

Employing children and young people

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require you to assess the risks to the health and safety of young people at work and take measures to protect them, taking account of:

- the young workers' lack of experience;
- their limited awareness of risks; and
- their immaturity, both physical and mental.

Make sure they have appropriate instruction, supervision and training, bearing in mind their capabilities.

Restrictions apply to what work young people can do. Where risks remain after control measures have been put in place, the young worker must not be exposed to any additional risk and should not be allocated this work.

Before employing a child of compulsory school age (normally under 16) to undertake any work activity, the employer must tell the parent of the child the findings of the risk assessment and how any risks identified will be controlled. This is as well as any licensing requirements imposed by the local education officer.

Licensing authorities determine the type of light work they will allow the child to do, and specify the length of working time permissible. Some local authorities exclude tractor operations from their licences.

A 15-year-old boy on a work experience scheme was helping a farmer clean out grain bins. The farmer was also supervising the loading of two lorries in the yard. While loading the first lorry, the farmer and lorry driver heard the boy shout. They rushed into the grain store and found him partially buried in a grain bin but could not rescue him.

An inexperienced 15-year-old boy was driving a tractor fitted with a loaded silage wagon at night, without lights. On a slope, the tractor hit a dip in the ground and overturned. The seat broke from its mountings, the boy was thrown about inside the cab and died from internal and spinal injuries. The tractor was not fitted with seat belts.

You need to consult your local authority child employment/education welfare officer before allowing children of compulsory school age to undertake light work on your farm. Local authority by-laws require licensing of child workers. This law is not enforced by HSE.

Young people between 16 and 18

Just because a young person has left school, it does not necessarily mean they will have the ability and maturity to carry out work in the same way as a more experienced adult.

Remember that while you may have assessed a task as suitable for a young person to do, you will still need to ensure they have the right training and equipment and are adequately supervised, especially while they are learning new skills. Make sure they are supervised until they are competent.

A 16-year-old farmer's son was working alone repairing the fragile roof of a cattle shed. He fell through a skylight to the concrete floor below and died from head injuries.

A 16-year-old trainee gamekeeper died alone when he went to feed pheasants. He was descending a slope driving an ATV with a load on the front rack. He was found with the quad bike overturned on top of him.



Younger children on the farm may look up to and want to copy young people at work. Make sure that these young people at work know they have the authority and responsibility to send other children (even their employer's child) back to the care of a responsible adult. They should not be expected to do their work and supervise younger children at the same time.

A 17-year-old employee was helping a farmer clear roof gutters. The 13-year-old farmer's son arrived. He wanted to go and see what the 17-year-old was doing and went across the fragile roof to where the older boy was working. His foot went through the roof and he fell to his death on the concrete floor below.

Remember that every example given in this leaflet is real and is one of many similar incidents. We hope that following this advice will help keep children and young people safe to be our farming future.

Find out more

Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions
www.face-online.org.uk/codeofpractice

Carrying of passengers on farm trailers Agriculture Information Sheet AIS36(rev1)
HSE 2012 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.htm

Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture HSG270 (Second edition)
HSE Books 2013 ISBN 978 0 7176 6579 2
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm

Guidance on storing pesticides for farmers and other professional users Agriculture Information Sheet AIS16(rev1)
HSE 2012 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais16.htm

Preventing access to effluent storage and similar areas on farms Agriculture Information Sheet AIS9(rev1) HSE 1997 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais9.pdf

Safe use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in agriculture and forestry Agriculture Information Sheet AIS33(rev1) HSE 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais33.htm

Visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk for links to the Countryside Code and websites for the Countryside Council of Wales and the Outdoor Access Code for Scotland.

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

This leaflet is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg472.htm.

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