

Keep Your Family Safe in Rural Areas

Summer is a time when many children visit family and friends who live in the country. You may be hosting young guests at your acreage or farm during the next few months. Dave Morgan, UNL Extension Safety Engineer Specialist, says "The greatest number of farm accidents occur during the summer. July has the highest accident rate." Over one-third of children injured in farm accidents, don't live on farms.

Take a few extra minutes to teach your children about safety. ATV's, tractors and ponds are among the causes of injuries and fatalities. Here are some ways in which you can keep your guests and family safe as you create positive summer memories.

ATV — Make Every Ride Safe



Since 2004, ATV's have been the leading cause of agricultural fatalities in Nebraska, averaging over five deaths each year. Children 15 and under account for 30 percent of the fatalities. A Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) report released in February indicates in the U.S., ATV fatalities killed 111 children under the age of 16 and injured over 39,000 seriously enough to be taken to the emergency room. Parents can help stop this trend by following and teaching the ATV riders in their families some basic safety techniques.

ATV's are not toys. They are not appropriate for children under six years of age. For children between 6 and 12 years only the smallest (50 cc) machines are suitable. Not only do young children lack the physical size and strength to operate a motorized vehicle safely, their ability to think through situations, their motor skills and their perception are

not fully developed. ATV's are difficult to ride and require constant attention to avoid accidents.

Between the ages of 12 and 16, youth should learn on and operate only mid-size ATV's (70 - 90 cc's). Adult-sized machines should be reserved for teens over 16 who have reached their full physical size.

Arrange for a training course. A hands-on training course offers youth the opportunity to receive experience operating an ATV under the supervision of a certified instructor. Practicing basic maneuvers on safe terrain gives teens confidence in handling the vehicle under your guidance.

Helmets save lives — insist on them! With your children, select helmets that fit them and their style. It is estimated helmets could have saved the lives of about 25 percent of those who died from head injuries in ATV accidents. The risk of head injury without helmet protection is twice as high as when an injured wore a helmet. Don't let helmets be an option; make them part of using the ATV.

Absolutely No Passengers! ATV's are designed for one operator. Their unique handling characteristics require focus and maneuverability from the driver. A second person seriously impairs the driver's ability to shift weight, steer and control the vehicle.

No paved roads. In Nebraska, the only time an ATV can legally be on a paved road is to cross it directly. ATV's are meant to be used on terrain. They react awkwardly and are difficult to control on pavement.

While all-terrain vehicles have been a work-saver for farmers and ranchers, families need to take the time and effort to teach youth how to operate them safely. The biggest risk factors leading to injuries are driver misuse and inappropriate driving behavior, such as excessive speed and allowing passengers to ride.

If you have an ATV, sit down with your children this week and review rules for the use of the ATV. You will also

need to decide the consequences (loss of ATV privileges might be a good one) if the rules are not followed. Make an appointment for a rider course from your local ATV dealer. If your children visit homes where there is an ATV, you should also discuss your expectations and how your children should handle situations where there are few or no rules — such as no use of helmets or the allowing of passengers on the ATV.

Tractor Safety is Everyone's Business



Young children should NEVER be allowed to ride along on a tractor.

Higher, Grandpa, higher! Gleelessly shouted 4-year-old Mikey Dobberpuhl to his grandfather, Harlow. His grandfather was feeding cattle with a front-end loader on a brisk March day in South Dakota. Mikey loved shadowing his grandfather's every move at chore time, even on a snow-packed winter day like this one. As he had done many times before, Mikey jumped in the scoop of the tractor-loader. With Mikey in tow, his grandfather drove toward the haystack. Once there, Harlow briefly glanced backward. Horrified, he saw Mikey's body lying in the snow. "I was hoping the soft snow would have cushioned him, but it wasn't enough," his grandfather said. Today, the Mikey D. Chapter (of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids) of Conde, SD works feverishly to educate local children, youth and farm families about not only tractor safety, but all aspects of farm safety. (Re-printed with permission from the *Dakota Farmer*)
Annually, in the United

States, over 350 fatalities are related to tractor incidents. Thirty percent of farm machinery related deaths are among children under the age of five.

Tractors are essential to modern agriculture, but are unfortunately, in the U.S., are identified as the largest hazard on the farm. Roll-over protective structure (ROPS) and seat belts, when worn, are the two most important safety devices to protect operators from death during tractor overturns.

As parents, it is important to both teach and model safe behavior when operating a tractor. When teaching and supervising teens, practice these tips:

- Securely fasten your seat belt in tractors with ROPS or cabs.
- Reduce speed when turning, crossing slopes, and on rough, muddy or slick terrain.
- Avoid slopes that are too steep for safe operation.
- No riders. Riders are allowed only for teaching or supervising purposes.
- Be sure everyone is clear before moving.
- Set brakes and use park locks, if available.
- Remove keys when leaving the tractor.

Young children should never be allowed to ride along on a tractor. Remember: No extra riders, no injured riders. It can't get any simpler.

Safety Around Ponds



Drowning ranks second only to motor vehicle mishaps as the most common cause of accidental death for children. Children under age four are at especially high risk. Even adults are at risk in water muddied by silt, plants and fish.

It takes only a few moments and an inch of water for a child to drown. Small

children have been known to drown in 5-gallon buckets. Most drowning, however, occurs when a child is left alone or accidentally falls into a pool or pond.

Farm ponds can look inviting, but many times they are deep with a sudden drop-off. A person can go from knee deep water to water 50 feet deep in seconds. Additionally, weeds growing from the bottom can entangle a person, making it difficult or impossible to return to the surface.

If you live close to a pond or irrigation source, take steps this spring to keep your family safe. Begin with these:

- Provide children over 3 years with swimming lessons.
- Fence off ponds and other water areas as feasible.
- Never leave a young child alone in water. A child can drown in the time it takes to answer a phone call.
- Adopt a "swimming buddy" policy for children. Where swimming is allowed, be sure children always swim with a friend or adult.
- Insist children use personal flotation devices, such as buoyant vests, cushions or rings.
- Keep rescue equipment near water areas. Purchase a flotation device or make one from a gallon plastic jug and attach a rope. Install a safety post near the pond. Tie the loose end of the rope to the post. Add a laminated poster with instructions on how to use and other water safety tips near the top of the post.
- Teach older children and teens "Reach, Throw and Wade", so they do not risk their lives to help a drowning victim.
- Be sure all swimmers know how to get help quickly. Older teens and adults should learn CPR.
- Never swim during storms or lightning.

Drowning rates are three times higher in rural areas than in urban areas and often occur in water like farm ponds and irrigation canals. Summer and water go together, so help keep your family safe with adult supervision of young children and teaching water safety measures to all family members.

LEAD

Nebraska LEAD Program
Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council, Inc.

(LEADERSHIP EDUCATION/ ACTION DEVELOPMENT)

Applications are now being accepted for Nebraska LEAD Group XXVIII, which begins in the fall of 2008.

Application deadline is June 15.

The Nebraska LEAD Program is specifically designed for both males and females involved in production agriculture or agribusiness, in the general range of 25-55, who are intent on making a difference by providing quality leadership for the future of the industry of agriculture and the state of Nebraska.

For application or re-application materials and/or further information, call the Nebraska LEAD Program at 472-6810.

On the Web at <http://lead.unl.edu>

Eggplant

continued from page 6

receive at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight each day.

Spacing—The mature size of the plant determines the correct spacing. Allow 18 to 24 inches between standard-sized eggplants. Smaller varieties can be planted closer together with 12 to 18 inch spacing between plants.

Watering—In addition to warm temperatures, eggplants need regular watering, about 1 inch of water per week, to keep plants productive. A 1 to 2 inch layer of organic mulch such as well-rotted compost or manure helps retain moisture, improve the soil and provide weed

control.

Harvesting and Storing Eggplants

Be sure to follow harvest guidelines for the eggplant variety you are growing. In general, large-fruited eggplants are ready to harvest 75 to 95 days from transplanting, while the small-fruited varieties and many of the newer hybrids are ready to harvest within 50 to 60 days of planting outdoors. Fruits should feel firm and have a glossy colored skin. Press lightly on the skin of the eggplant with your finger. If the pressed spot springs back it is ripe; if the imprint remains the fruit is overripe and will tend to be seedy and somewhat bitter. Harvest fruits regularly to

keep plants producing. Use a sharp knife or pruning shears to cut the eggplants from the plant. Do not try to remove the fruit by twisting or pulling as this can damage or break the entire plant. Eggplant fruits are best used fresh but will keep for about a week when loosely wrapped in a perforated plastic bag and stored in your refrigerator's vegetable crisper or in a cool pantry.

If you can not remember the last time you ate eggplant, this is the season for something new.

Eggplants offer endless possibilities to try something different this year and in years to come.

Source: The National Garden Bureau