

A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS RURAL COMMUNITY

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Farming today

The SIDE conference is designed to motivate and up skill you on your business.

The thought of becoming incapacitated and not being able to run your business after an injury can be traumatic with grave financial consequences. The tragedy of finding a close friend under his ATV has changed my out look on farm safety. To see families dreams crushed and the pain and anguish that follows is an awakening for us all.

We must treat our farm with respect at all times, even the safest person can be injured. Cutting corners to save a penny may have little use to you later on in life if you are either sitting in a wheelchair or even worse, lying in a local cemetery.

Why FarmSafe?

FarmSafe has been developed as a joint initiative between Agriculture ITO, Telford Rural Polytechnic and Agriculture New Zealand Ltd. The concept was born from farmers complaining to Federated Farmers about ever increasing ACC levies. Fed Farmers went into discussions with ACC whose response was that farmers are levied in relation to the number of claims and the cost of those claims. These claims had continued to increase each year along with rising medical costs, hence levy increases. Both Fed Farmers and ACC agreed that this was not sustainable and some form of change was needed. Hence the FarmSafe Consortium was evolved to provide quality training, assessment and services to make the rural community a safer and more prosperous place.

“She’ll be right mate” - Culture and attitude to risk

This is a very common phrase used when talking about safety on farm.

What excuses can we use?

- Lose too much time when putting on personal protection equipment (PPE)
- Cost of purchasing the PPE
- “Makes me look ridiculous”
- Peer pressure - creates interpretations of being ‘soft’
- Attitude - “I don’t like being told what to do”

- Past experience - “It will never happen to me”
- We have industry guidelines in place and only do what we have to e.g. legislation
- Ethics - “I have never had an accident so why should I change?” “Why should I make my staff do what I think is unnecessary?”

Changing attitudes and culture

Lost time and inconvenience factor by putting on and taking off PPEs

One farmer said the time taken makes you ask the question, “Why am I doing this? The answer is that it is reminder to you that the machine you are getting on is dangerous.

The cost of safety equipment

An example given to me from a logging contractor:

He stated the simple fact of carrying minimal first aid with you can save money and help maintain productivity. In the past if a bushman had sustained a small cut he would continue on and deal with the injury either at the next break or that night. In the mean time dirt could enter the wound and infection could start. Over the next couple of days the wound could get septic. Work rate could drop off because of the discomfort and the possible chance of having another accident has increased. This can lead to many days off. Putting a dollar figure on this example could lead into thousands. 5 minutes spent straight after receiving the cut, covering the wound could have prevented all this.

“Makes me look ridiculous”

Just imagine how you would look if you were not wearing safety gear and suffered a head injury. You could be in a wheel chair, may have to be fed every meal or even require assistance when you need to go to the toilet? As in all safety equipment, it is designed to make you safe and also be practical. Once that is achieved, the addition of colour and writing can alleviate the nerd factor.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is greater in older rather than the younger generation. Older farmers are threatened by all these law changes and are reluctant to accept any change, especially if it is forced upon them. That is human nature. The younger generation don’t carry this baggage as much and most can see the benefits. There are still some that are influenced by the older generation and use that excuse to challenge the system.

Molly Vanner's story

A 4 year old girl killed on an ATV in front of her father while out in the field bringing in the cows, is a heart wrenching story. The reality is that it is very similar to many of our own stories where we allow our children to drive the four wheeler through the gate while we open it and then slowly progressing to the stage where we give them a simple task. The reality is driven home by this story and both Molly's parents admit that no children under the age of 12 should be allowed to ride an ATV. If you want your children to help on the farm, look for alternatives eg a two wheeler that is designed for their size, along with training and lots of supervision. This publicity may dwell on someone's misfortune but it is used in the hope that we learn from someone else's mistakes and don't have to experience that pain ourselves.

Many of us have been trained by our fathers who in turn were trained by their fathers. Question - what qualifications did they have and or did they teach us the best and safest way?

In many situations when a new item of machinery turns up, we rush out and start playing with it. That night, out comes the manual and whoola, "I never knew it could do that!" – a typical Kiwi male? Companies who sell machinery are providing training but even so, not everyone is taking the opportunity to further their knowledge.

Industry guidelines

Do we wear our seat belt because it may save our lives or saves us \$150? Unlike laws which control our roads on our farms, we have recommendations

"It will never happen to me"

Experiencing an injury event first hand is traumatic. If you ever had any belief that it will never happen to you, it will very quickly dissipate. Your mind asks the questions why and how, and then soon to follow, what can I do to make sure this is not going to happen to me or anyone else around me. The number of people effected is enormous - family, friends, community, medical care givers, and many more.

Ethics and morals

"I have never worn any PPE's (Personal Protection Equipment) and I am still in good health" – is it therefore unethical to make you wear PPE? In many cases, by not leading by example shows a belief that it will never happen to you.

Research findings - education *does* work

Kate Morgaine has been studying the effectiveness of the FarmSafe Awareness programme and was funded by an ACC PhD research award. Kate has interviewed a large number of participants to find out if people made changes as a result of attending a workshop.

29 farmers/farm workers who had attended a FarmSafe workshop in three different geographic areas were interviewed. People in the interviews reported changing their attitudes and their practice towards safety. Several farmers reported direct action they had taken as a result of attending a FarmSafe Awareness workshop. Some were as simple as banning their children from riding ATVs or installing a non-slip floor in the dairy shed. Others considered their role as the 'boss' as one of setting the tone and they credit the course with raising their awareness and their ability to do something about it for themselves and their staff. Some met with their staff to discuss safety on the farm.

Below are quotes from several of the farmers and farm workers interviewed:

“It makes you realise the number of things you do everyday which are an accident waiting to happen, and it’s a close call.”

“I probably try and leave a bit of time to try not to rush things. I’m probably a bit more conscious about using protective clothing and the right safety stuff.”

And to illustrate his point he reported an incident that had happened after the course where he took action that was different to his practice before the course.

“I was just using a grinder and had the welding helmet on and the gloves on and the disk flew apart on me, cut right through my glove, into my finger and flew up and smashed the helmet. And I was just thinking ‘geez, if I didn’t have that on!’ You know. So it’s just something I took the time to do and if I hadn’t done it ...”

How FarmSafe can help you and your business

FarmSafe’s vision is ‘A safe and prosperous rural community’. Through education and training, the workshops aim to reduce the number and severity of on-farm injuries, thereby minimising the financial implications of workplace injuries for you and your family.

FarmSafe has a range of workshops available. Owners, managers and staff are all eligible as long as you are over 16 years old, a NZ or Australian citizen, and not currently attending any other educational institute. Courses are run in your local area, lunch is included and all we ask you to bring is an open mind.

FarmSafe awareness

This is the foundation programme, designed to heighten your awareness of injury prevention and help you make your farm a safer place. This one day workshop provides the latest information on the major causes of injuries in the sector, and it draws on participant experiences to best demonstrate examples to support safer work practices.

FarmSafe plans

This is a one day workshop to follow-up FarmSafe Awareness. This workshop addresses the skills and knowledge to prepare and action an effective Farm Safety Plan for your property. An effective plan will not only help reduce injury risks on your property, but will also contribute to meeting your statutory requirements in relation to Health and Safety.

FarmSafe skills

These are a series of interactive workshops held over two days, up to two weeks apart. They focus on increasing the practical skills of those who work on farms; ensuring that you and your staff have the necessary skills to do farm jobs safely is critical for a safe work environment. FarmSafe Skills consists of six specialist workshops covering tuition, practice and assessment: riding ATV's, using Chainsaws, driving Tractors, riding Motorbikes, Animal Handling, and also a one day course on using Agrichemical/Approved Handler.

To find out further details and register for a workshop in your local area, call 0800 545 747.

Summary

Keeping you and your staff fit and healthy has to be one of the most profitable exercises you can carry out.

Currently we are guided by recommendations. How much longer are we going to be able to sustain paying high levies and premiums and having so many injuries before the government says enough? Would a policing system prevent injuries? Currently we have a choice.

In my case, down on the farm I needed to change many things. This would have taken weeks however once I had listed all my hazards, I prioritised which I needed to address first. Over the next few months I had dealt to all urgent issues and continued on with all the minor hazards. By implying rules and leading by example we try our best to minimise any untoward incident from happening.

Ideally this should become the new and accepted learned behaviour for all in the industry, making our industry safer, more profitable and enjoyable

Can you sleep at night knowing you have done everything in your power to make your farm part of a safe and prosperous rural community?