



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Take the time

It sure felt chilly this morning. Fall is upon us, and that means fall harvest, football games, chili suppers, fall processing, school activities and preparing for the winter. It also means long hours, tired farmers, impatient drivers and accidents. Take the time this fall to stay safe and spend time with your family.

Always the time

Farm Safety and Health Week, Sept. 19-25, will be over by the time you get your *Angus Journal*, but the time to play it safe lasts year-round.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), in 2003 more than 700 farmers and ranchers were injured in work-related accidents. Another 120,000 were disabled.

Women, children and seniors are each singled out by the NSC for being at special risk for injury. Contributing factors for women include clothing and long hair; for seniors, hearing loss and/or handling machinery while on medication.

More than 200 of the deaths reported were among children, who are often bystanders or passengers on large farm machinery.

Less obvious injuries

While injuries are an obvious hurt, agricultural occupations can contribute to health problems in less-obvious ways. How many farmers and ranchers in their 50s and older do you know who have hearing loss caused by repetitive noise? How many in their 40s?

The NSC notes that farmers and ranchers are at risk for respiratory diseases and exposure to agricultural chemicals. Find out more on the organization's Web site, www.nsc.org.

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK) notes the danger to rural youth from long-term exposure to the sun, the most common form of cancer. The nonprofit organization, started by Marilyn Adams after the death of her 11-year-old son in a gravity-flow wagon, promotes farm safety for kids.

In addition to teaching children the risks associated with sun exposure, the organization espouses that children need to be taught how and when to use eye-protection equipment, as well as the fact that direct and indirect animal-to-human transmission of pathogens, such as *E. coli* and

Salmonella, account for 50% of human infectious diseases.

Ergonomics is an important issue to consider when assigning farm tasks to youth who may have repercussions later for lifting too much at an early age. On its Web site, www.fs4jk.org, FS4JK recommends that youth not lift more than 10%-15% of their body weight.

This year, the organization is focusing on the leading cause of death to children on the farm — tractors. Its educational programs and media interactions will stress tractor safety issues, such as no extra riders, rollover protective structures and proper training.

Another risk

Maybe the most dangerous health risk to rural workers is distance and isolation. With my dad having severe reactions to bee stings, my family grew up working in pairs, and it was not an intrusion for Mom to want to know when and where we were at all times and when we expected to be home. It was a matter of life and death.

Still, many in agriculture work long hours in solitude. And the distance to emergency medical care can compound the risk of any injury. We hear testimonies of the will to live of rural folks injured in the field or back 40 who crawl their way back to civilization or wait for hours for help, but what we wouldn't do or give to spare them that misery.

Well, what would you do to prevent that from happening to you or to your loved one? Would you think twice before removing safety guards from equipment or skipping the earplugs and facemask? Would you go get help before taking a risk with a cow that's calving or an ornery bull?

Would you?

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