

Farmer gives grandchildren rides in tractor: footage released

Video footage taken by a neighbour captured the moment a farmer allowed one of his grandchildren to illegally ride in his tractor and ultimately led to his conviction.

Howard Walters, 78, was given a 12 month community order after he was spotted with the child in the tractor cab as he fed cattle on his farm in South Wales.

Walters had already been issued with a prohibition notice by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in November 2020 after admitting to inspectors he allowed his pre-teen grandchildren to ride in his tractor. However, just two months later, he was filmed by his neighbour flagrantly breaching the terms of that notice.

A HSE inspector who investigated Mr Walters says the law is “very clear”. Children under 13 are specifically prohibited from driving or riding on or in any agricultural machine, including the tractor cab.

At the time of committing the offence, Walters, of Tirmynydd Farm in Birchgrove, Swansea, was already the subject of a suspended prison sentence for unrelated environmental offences. In a case that was heard on 27 August 2024 at Swansea Crown Court, he was fined £500 for breaching the terms of that sentence. As part of his community order, Walters must attend 25 days of rehabilitation.

Agriculture remains one of the most dangerous industries in Britain, with on average around 29 people killed each year. Being killed by vehicles remains the most significant cause of work related fatality over the last five years.

Unfortunately, children are among those deaths with it often being the case that they are family members, with many killed by farm vehicles.

How farmers can keep children safe:

- Children must not be allowed in the farm workplace (young children should enjoy outdoor space in a secure fenced area).
- Any access to the farm workplace by children under 16, for example for education, or knowledge / experience, must be planned and fully supervised by an adult not engaged in any work activity.
- Children under the age of 13 years are specifically prohibited from driving or riding on any agricultural machine. It is illegal.
- Properly trained, instructed, and supervised older children may, in tightly controlled circumstances, be able to help with some straightforward low risk tasks.

Further detailed guidance about [child safety on farms and in agriculture](#) is

available.

Howard Walters, of Tirmynydd Farm in Birchgrove, Swansea, pleaded guilty to breaching section 33(1)(g) Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was given a 12 month community order and ordered to pay £3,000 in costs.

HSE inspector Simon Breen said: "The law around children being allowed in the cabs of any agricultural vehicle is very clear. For any child to ride on agricultural machinery like a tractor is unsafe and illegal.

"The fact this farmer chose to ignore a prohibition notice for putting his grandchildren at risk is all the more staggering.

"We will take action against those who break the law.

"The solution is very simple – young children should never ride in agricultural vehicles."

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).