

Half-term call to keep children safe near farms

Families who live on farms are being urged to keep their children safe this half-term.

Schools across England and Wales break up this week for the October holidays meaning farming children who would usually be in the classroom will now be at home during the day.

This can pose childcare issues for farming families especially at a busy time in agriculture. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Great Britain's workplace regulator, says for some farmers the family home and the working farm are often side by side, though they should be regarded as separate.

Agriculture has one of the highest fatal injury rates of any industry in Great Britain but is the only high-risk industry that also sees children often present.

Children and young people up to the age of 18 are regularly killed and injured on farms. Eight children were killed on farms in the five years up to March.

HSE is reminding all adults working on farms that children and young people must be kept safe.

HSE's Acting Principal Inspector (Agriculture Sector) Wayne Owen said: "The best way to ensure the safety of children is simply to keep them away from the working farm. Working farms are no place for children.

"But if children are visiting the farm workplace, they must be kept away from higher risk areas such as operating machinery, slurry pits and bale stacks, and most importantly they should be with an adult who understands the risks on the farm and is not engaged in any work activity. Their sole focus should be on supervising the child.

"If older children are starting to help out on the farm, anything but the very simplest of tasks is likely to expose them to risk of injury or death and is unacceptable. In addition, all children should be under full supervision by an adult not engaged in any work activity.

"Children under 13 should not under any circumstances operate or ride on agricultural machinery – it is illegal – and children under 16 should not operate adult sized ATVs in the farm workplace.

"Where children over 13 are allowed to operate some machinery, this should only be allowed after careful risk assessment, while under close supervision, and crucially after the child has received appropriate and structured training."

The ways in which children and adults are killed on farms varies little from year to year. The most common causes of death and major injury in the last decade include being killed by moving vehicles, coming into contact with machinery while it is operating, falling from height, being killed by animals, and being struck by falling objects.

- For simple and practical guidance on assessing the risks on your farm and what you need to do to control them visit: [Agriculture: Risk assessment \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/risk-assessment/)
- This is also some good guidance on child safety on farms – [Agriculture: Children and public safety \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/children-public-safety/)
- Information on preventing accidents to children on farms can be found here: [Preventing accidents to children on farms INDG472\(rev4\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/indg472/)
- [Fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain 2021/2022 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/fatal-injuries-agriculture-forestry-fishing-great-britain-2021-2022/)