

Make Country Living Fun and Safe This Year

Living is easy in the country except when the critters and farm equipment take a bite out of you!

Farms are fun places for kids— fresh air, sunshine and room to roam—but serious work gets done there and some of that work involves equipment and animals that can be dangerous if someone doesn't know how to be safe. The National Safety Council reports that farming is one of America's most hazardous jobs with kids ages 10 to 14 at highest risk for injury because they take on a job or task that they aren't ready to handle.

“Kids living on a farm, or just visiting, need to know what it takes to be safe,” says Jeannette Morgan, M.D., with Greenfield Medical Services. “Establishing and practicing safety rules for working around equipment and animals can prevent injuries,” says Dr. Morgan who recommends these safety rules:

Rule 1: Listen to your parents or other supervisors.

Rule 2: Be aware of your surroundings at play. Are you too close to animals or equipment?

Rule 3: Helping out is good, but learn how to use equipment with adult supervision. Don't try to learn on your own.

Rule 4: If there is a job you want to do, ask first. Be sure it is age appropriate. Driving a tractor looks fun, but you need to be big enough to handle the equipment.

“Most farm equipment is a lot bigger than children,” says Certified Nurse Practitioner Ray Mick from Greenfield Medical Services. “Young children or pre-teens should never operate equipment such as pickup trucks, tractors or combines. Even lawn mowers or all-terrain vehicles should be considered off-limits. All of these are powerful machines and it is easy for a child to be thrown from them. Even when these vehicles are not in use they can present dangerous situations, so don't play on them.”

Some tips to remember when around equipment:

Never ride in the back of a pickup truck or on the fender of a tractor.

Don't be an extra rider on a tractor.

Stay out of the path of any moving equipment.

Seek adult supervision before using electric tools, and always use protective equipment such as gloves or goggles.

Be safe around animals

“Being on a farm may also expose kids to animals. Even domesticated animals such as cattle, horses, pigs

and sheep can pose threats to children,” says Melissa Gargasz, D.O. “Rule of thumb,” says this family physician, “don’t approach an animal or get into its pen without adult supervision. A frightened animal is a dangerous animal. If you want to be kind to animals, give them their space.”

“Gentle animals are best for interacting with children,” says Dr. Gargasz. Learning to milk a cow or a goat is something visitors like to do on a farm. But, the learning process can be awkward for both the animal and the first timer. A very gentle animal and adult supervision is of major importance, says Dr. Morgan. “Watch out for the animals’ feet and heads—they are heavy and strong—and mouths have a lot of teeth. Animals may not mean to harm you, but little fingers straying too close can get nipped,” says Dr. Gargasz. “Another safety precaution after petting animals is to wash hands,” she adds.

Protect against bug bites

Warm soapy water is also a good way to take care of skin, soothing scrapes and bug bites kids might collect playing. If kids are walking in tall grass, it is essential to check for ticks. “Prevention is the best way to deal with ticks,” says Doctor Gargasz. “Children should wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, ball caps to tuck in long hair and pants tucked into socks. If you do find a tick, don’t freak out—just gently pull out the tick with tweezers, making sure you get the entire bug. Wash your hands and the bite area, then apply some alcohol.”

Contact your health practitioner if:

the tick may have been attached more than 24 hours

part of the tick remains embedded after trying to remove it

your child has a rash

any sign of infection appears

symptoms such as fever, fatigue, headache, chills, stiff neck or back, or muscle or joint aches develop.

With safety rules established, tick checks and plenty of warm soapy water, kids can enjoy the farm and create lasting memories. We also hope you enjoy the Highland County Fair. Greenfield Medical Services 937.981.1121.