

# Noise Dangers On the Farm



Loud rock music is not the only thing that could be damaging to the future hearing ability of our next generation of farmers. Hearing loss is usually associated with the elderly but it doesn't usually happen overnight. Those who live and work on the farm are in close proximity to many loud noises such as running tractors, machinery, tools, and livestock.

It's never too early to be concerned about exposure to high noise levels on the farm. Farm residents and visitors should not be exposed to deafening decibel levels. Continuous sounds of more than 85 decibels are considered hazardous. If you have to shout to be heard three feet away the noise level is probably greater than 85 decibels. When pigs squeal the noise level can reach 130 decibels.

Distance from the noise source also impacts the exposure. As a person moves away from the sound, loudness drops off quickly. The key is to keep noisy items as far away as possible. When that's not possible wear hearing protection devices.

The noisy farm environment has taken its toll on many farm operators' hearing capabilities. Studies in various states indicate that many agricultural workers experience hearing loss by age 17. Approximately 50% of older farmers have significant hearing loss.

## **All humans can be harmed by exposure to loud noises. To prevent children from early hearing loss:**

- Keep children away from loud machinery and drying bins when motors are running.
- Have kids stay in the house when the lawn mower is in operation.
- Do not allow children in confined livestock area, especially when animals are most likely to be loud such as when they are being handled.
- If children cannot avoid loud noises supply them with hearing protection devices.

Hearing protection devices such as muffs and ear plugs are available but may take some adjustment. The long-term benefit - retention of good hearing - outweighs any short-term inconveniences from wearing muffs or plugs. Isn't it worth hearing your grandchildren say "I Love You, Grandpa" when you're older?

Farm Safety



Just Kids