

Safe Play Areas for Children on the Farm

Children are at risk! The farm is an inherently dangerous place for children if adults do not provide a safe place for young, curious minds to explore and learn about the benefits of farm and ranch living.

Children are vulnerable to many of the same hazards as adults who live, visit or work on farms, but they are less capable of understanding these hazards. Although parents cannot completely child-proof a farm, they need to make it as safe as possible. Machinery, equipment, grain, chemicals, structures and livestock are all associated with potential hazards. Combine these work place locations with curious children and the results may be catastrophic.

One way to prevent these tragedies from taking place is to create a safe play area. Designated play areas protect children by removing them from the work environment. Let children know what the play boundaries are and what consequences will be enforced if the boundaries are crossed. Rules are only effective if they are a part of daily life and the consequences of breaking rules are enforced. Explain why off-limit areas are dangerous.

Rules need to be used in conjunction with supervision. Close supervision is an important aspect of keeping young kids safe on the farm. Children often put themselves in danger. Children, especially the very young, may not know how to handle unexpected situations, such as an uncovered well, a mother animal with babies, or scattered trash from a wind storm. Set restrictions for children and give them with guidelines to keep them safe.

When determining a safe play area consider:

- A location separate from traffic and work areas.
- A location with easily identifiable boundaries. Fences are ideal.
- A location which can be easily supervised, such as looking out a back window.
- A location free from dangerous debris.
- A location with enough room to run and explore.
- A location with safe and age-appropriate play equipment.

Give children reasons to stay in the identified play area. Provide appropriate play items, such as swings, a sand box, or playhouse, which make the play area appealing to children. If the farmstead is more enticing than the designated play area, your efforts may not be effective.

A safe outdoor play area away from livestock, traffic and machinery is essential for children to grow up safe and healthy on a farm or ranch. Keep our next generation of rural children safe!



Farm Safety



Just Kids