

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 18th June 2021

In 2020, 19 farm workplace related deaths have occurred (provisional H.S.A data, to 30th December). Three of these deaths occurred to children and young persons aged 16 years or younger. Ten deaths have occurred to farmers aged 65 years or older. Six deaths have occurred to persons in the 17-64 age cohort.

Twelve farm deaths were associated with farm vehicles or machinery, being struck or crushed as the major cause. A further 5 deaths were associated with livestock, including 2 bull attacks, and 1 associated with slurry and a further 1 is under investigation.

Even though there has been a drop of 18% in farm workplace deaths over the last 3 years, the number of tragedies is still too high in the country and our aim of 0 deaths every day has not changed.

- We are entering a time of year on farms where there is an increased risk of health and safety. Contractors are present on farm cutting silage and spreading slurry etc. Take the time to discuss health and safety with your contractor and his team before they enter the yard. We must constantly be on alert during this period as between 2007 and 2016, 48% of farm deaths have been due to tractors or machinery. Discuss the possible areas for concern on the farm and plan a route for them to take when driving in and out. Also inform them of any people that may be in the yard while they are working.
- Due to the fact children are on summer holidays from school, they may be around machinery more so than they would have been up to this point in the year. Between 2007 and 2016, 70% of child deaths on farms have been due to either tractors or machinery.
- Take the time to educate children on the dangers of farm machinery and promote safe practice at all times. Ensure that they know to remain a safe distance from a machine until they are sure that it is stopped and they know that the operator can see them approaching.
- For younger children, invest in secure fencing and gates between garden areas and farm yards. Also ensure that everyone that enters the farm knows that any gates between these areas are to remain closed at all times.
- 15% of deaths associated with machinery between 2007 and 2016 were due to quads. Ensure that a helmet is worn at all times when operating ATV's. Fitting a rollover bar also decreases the risks of serious injury in the case of a rollover. Crucially, children below the age of 16 should not be allowed to operate these vehicles.
- When working with PTO driven machines, ensure that the machine has an O guard at the machine end along with a functioning cover on the PTO shaft. Also ensure that there is a U guard present at the tractor end.
- If any problems occur during the operation of a PTO driven machine, Stop the tractor and PTO and ensure that the machine has fully stopped before removing any guards or starting work on the machine.
- Statistics show that 54% of livestock related deaths were in people over 65 years old. 46% of these deaths were from livestock attacks in the field. Encourage older farm workers to herd livestock from the safety of a farm vehicle. If it is necessary to walk through the animals, ensure that an escape route is always planned and it can be beneficial to carry a stick for protection if difficulty is encountered.
- When spreading slurry after silage has been cleared from fields, ensure that all precautions are taken to minimise risk when handling slurry and slurry equipment. When agitating slurry, the risk of slurry gases are highest for the first 30 minutes while the crust is being broken. Ensure to position yourself as far away as possible and ensure that all livestock are removed and the shed is well ventilated. One lung full of slurry gas can kill.
- Ensure that all guards, covers and fencing of slurry tanks and lagoons are maintained and are in position at all times.