Farm accidents – alarming rise

Farm accidents have risen by 13% in the last five years and by 31% in the last 10 years. This is the stark finding of a national survey of Farm Accidents conducted by Teagasc National Farm Survey.

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KEY MESSAGE:
MANAGE SAFETY ON YOUR FARM

- The survey highlights a rising trend of accidents on Irish farms. It also indicates increased levels of both livestock and vehicle related accidents. Agricultural output has expanded rapidly in recent years following quota abolition which gives rise to risk factors including long hours, rushing, tiredness and stress.
- The key message is that accident prevention must be integrated into overall farm management.
- Engineering approaches focus on ‘Engineering’ out hazards and ‘Behavioural’ work practice approaches.
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The survey showed that almost two-thirds of farm accidents occurred in the farmyard (64%) and a further 15% in farm buildings. Almost one-fifth of accidents (19%) were in fields with only 2% on farm roads or lanes.

The highest frequency of accidents occurred within the time frame of the survey.

Over the period 1996 to 2017, 42% of accidents involved livestock with farm vehicles or machinery involved in a further 28% of accidents (Figure 2).

Trips or falls resulted in a further 13% of farm accidents occurring to the farmer. Twelve per cent involved a spouse or another family member. The remainder involved workers (5%) and others (3%).

Location of injury
The survey showed that almost two-thirds of farm accidents occurred in the farmyard (64%) and a further 15% in farm buildings. Almost one-fifth of accidents (19%) were in fields with only 2% on farm roads or lanes.

Medical treatment required
Almost all of the reported farm accidents (97%) required medical treatment, with 13% of accident victims attending hospital, a further 18% seeing a doctor and 4% recovering first aid.

Recovery time
In terms of the impact of farm accidents on work time, almost one-third (30%) of accidents resulted in a work absence of more than a month, with 21% being more than two months. Thirteen per cent of accidents resulted in an 11 and 30 days’ work absence, 22% led to four to 10 days of an absence, while 18% resulted in one-to-three days of an absence. Just 17% of accidents resulted in no work time loss. Ongoing disability arising from accidents were not measured in the survey.

Accident occurrence by farm system
Data for prevalence of accidents by farm system (Figure 3) indicates that dairy farms had the highest accident rate of 18%. Accidents occurred on 12% of tillage farms and 11% of sheep farms with the cattle systems of rearing (8%) and finishing (8%) reporting marginally lower accident levels.

Persons injured
The 2017 survey indicates that the vast majority of on-farm accidents (92%) involved a family member with 80% occurring to the farmer. Twelve per cent involved a spouse or another family member. The remainder involved workers (5%) and others (3%).

Accident categories

Accident occurrence by age category

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