



Agricultural Extension Service
College of Agriculture

LIBRARY
SEP 15 1967
Farming Fever
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO
Its causes, symptoms
and effects

BY H.C. TANKERSLEY
Safety Specialist
Rural Civil Defense Leader

Agricultural Experiment Station
University of Idaho

WHAT can a "farming fever" accident cost you?

Mr. Wib Meyer is a farmer who operates a 200 acre dairy farm in the Midwest. Wib has always done a good job of farming and his family has enjoyed the benefits of an efficient operation. Financial records on Wib's farm have been kept by the farm management service of the state university. Indications were that this farm had a gross income of about \$18,000 per year. A good income for 1958.

However, in 1959, a banner year for Midwest dairymen, Wib's records showed a gross income of \$12,000. In going over the records the farm management specialist found that Wib's dairy production had dropped, his pigs per litter saved were below the break-even point and his crop yields were disappointing. In searching for a reason, they found that early in January Wib had broken his leg in a farm accident. His leg had been set and although he was able to get around, he could not manage his farm efficiently.

The dairy cattle were not fed at the proper time nor with the proper ration. The hog house was not ready for spring farrowing and so he lost the little pigs. Crops were not planted in time nor was Wib able to give them the attention he had previously. Because he tried to get by without extra help, Wib's leg had to be reset just at the time when crop work was at its peak.

WHAT did this accident cost Wib?

"About \$150.00 in doctor bills and some inconvenience," was Wib's answer. Let's take another look at the costs. In addition to the \$150.00 doctor bills the accident cost the farm at least six thousand dollars gross income.

Statistics show that farm accidents occur with much greater frequency during peak activity periods. During the planting and harvest seasons farm accidents happen as much as 10 times more often than during periods of lesser activity in Idaho. This is due to long hours of work and the fact that as workers get tired they tend to take chances to save time rather than using good sense. This is "FARMING FEVER."

WHY does the farmer take chances knowing the possible results?

One reason is that he is often the farm manager, the chairman of the board, president of the corporation, marketing economist and the janitor for his business. The livelihood and the standard of living of his family depend directly upon him. Lack of readily available extra labor often requires the farmer to work exceedingly long hours, or at least he feels he must. Too often the farmer is preoccupied with thoughts of managing his

business and with the pressure of the season and climate while operating a piece of complicated machinery. Often he is so concerned with "getting the job done" to insure his family a maximum income that he fails to consider the consequences of acting unwisely at any given moment.



An obvious conclusion is that pressures of the season, lack of available extra labor, the need to make management decisions, and long hours on the job are things that cause "Farming Fever." Being overtired, impatient, rushed, and taking risks are symptoms of "Farming Fever." If we accept these conclusions, it is logical to conclude that accidents costing money, lost time and death are the effects of "Farming Fever."



There were 2500 farm people killed on farms while performing farm jobs last year. In addition, a quarter million other people were seriously injured in farm accidents. The cost to U.S. agriculture was in excess of half a billion dollars.

In Idaho, every year an average of 25 people die in farm accidents. These accidents occur on farms, to farm people, while performing farm jobs. An additional 2400 people receive disabling injuries and 5100 receive injuries of a minor nature each year. These accidents cost Idaho agriculture an amount equal to about 6.5% of the total realized net income from farming in the state.

Farming as an occupation has a death rate of 64.1 deaths per 100,000 farm residents. This compares to the death rate of 55.2 per 100,000 population for all accidents.



WHY the high accident rate on farms?

Here are some of the answers.

1. The agricultural worker is involved in an occupation in which his work and home environments are one and the same. The whole family is involved in the work accident picture both as bystanders and participants.

2. Agricultural machines are generally designed to grasp, cut, pull, or shape products. This equipment is powered by motors ranging in size from a fraction to hundreds of horse power. These machines are not selective in their operation if hands, fingers or feet become entangled in their actions. In a recent Idaho farm accident survey, nearly all accidents on the farm involving farm machines were the result of cleaning out or otherwise placing hands or feet into or on machinery without turning it off.





3. Optimum safety for the user of farm equipment has long been over-looked in equipment design. Equipment for agricultural uses has been developed to get the job done with the least possible investment of time and money. There has been no clamor for incorporation of safety features by users of farm equipment. Some question has been raised whether or not farmers would be willing to pay for the additional cost of designing farm equipment with an eye to the safety of the operator.

4. In addition to the special hazards a farmer faces, he also has to contend with the same hazards facing his city cousins. He operates the same electrical equipment in his home, has the same heating devices, and uses the same do-it-yourself equipment. His exposure to hazards is greater than most urban dwellers.



5. Farm work presents some hazards inconsistent with the actual task being performed. For example, the farmer is often faced with the task of moving his farm equipment from the farmstead to the field on a public highway. Here he is in competition with vehicles designed for high speed travel, while his tractor or machine is designed to function in an entirely different manner. The farm machine cannot hope to blend in smoothly with the flow of traffic.

6. The use of modern equipment on the farm often presents serious hazards because of the nature of their use. For example, the farmer has a rotary power lawn mower the same as the city dweller. However, his lawn size is usually much greater. He is more likely to run into obstructions, such as baling wire, and to mow over rough surfaces. The farmer may actually use his rotary mower more hours per year than he will operate any other piece of equipment designed for a specific operation, such as a combine or potato harvester.

7. The farmer is involved in an occupation which is essentially seasonal in nature. He must "make hay while the sun shines." This is the reason for high accident rates which deserves most of our attention. It is the real key to preventing farm accidents.

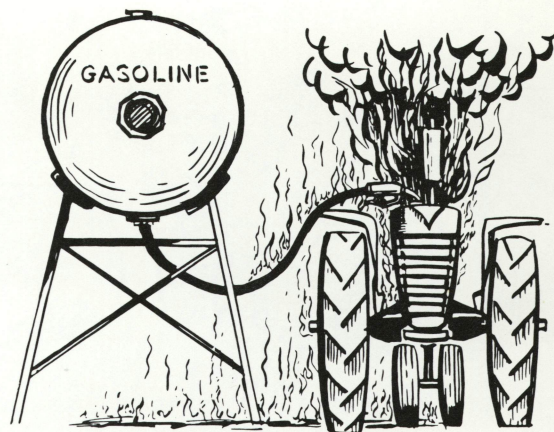


The harvest season in Idaho is the season when "Farming Fever" is most likely to occur and we should practice preventive medicine. The prescription for prevention of "Farming Fever" is simple but one which is difficult to apply. It is **THINKING SAFETY**. This requires that the farmer always consider the consequences of his actions, identify the hazards related to the situation and then act accordingly. He should reinforce his resolution to do this by asking himself this question. What would happen to my family, their standard of living and our farm if I were maimed or incapacitated?

With the coming of the harvest season, combines, corn pickers, windrowers, rakes, mowing machines, potato harvesters, sugar beet harvesters, balers, beaters, scalpings, and a myriad of other equipment will be in use. Each presents its hazards and the operator should enumerate them to himself before he climbs on the machine.

There are a few simple general rules anyone can remember. These, if observed can reduce farm accidents with machinery by one-half.

1. Keep all guards in place.
2. Never dismount from a tractor or machine without disengaging the driving mechanism.
3. Be sure equipment is in good operating condition before heading into the field.
4. Permit only the operator on the machine. **NO RIDERS!**
5. Don't allow oil or grease to accumulate where you have to climb or stand.
6. Replace worn out mufflers. Loud engine noise can **permanently** impair your hearing.
7. Keep wheels spread as wide as possible to prevent tipping.
8. Keep a proper fire extinguisher attached to machine.
9. Refuel a **cool** engine only.
10. Be sure brakes are evenly adjusted.
11. Use slow moving vehicle emblems when moving on highway or road.
12. Take a mid-morning and mid-afternoon refreshment break. A half-hour is about right.



Those of us interested in promoting farm safety are in complete sympathy with the farmer and farm worker trying to meet harvest deadlines. Sympathy, however, won't prevent accidents or get the job done if the farmer is injured. Only the farmer can prevent farm accidents!

As you begin the harvest season, Mr. Farmer, your chances are about one in ten that you will have an injury producing accident before you are finished. Don't succumb to "**Farming Fever.**"

PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED IN FURTHERANCE OF THE ACTS OF MAY 8 AND JUNE 30, 1914,
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE, JAMES E. KRAUS,
DIRECTOR; AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATING.

James E. Kraus

JAMES E. KRAUS, Director