

MANITOBA FARM SAFETY PROGRAM

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CREATE SAFE PLAY AREAS FOR CHILDREN ON YOUR FARM

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA – AUGUST 13, 2018 - Especially during harvest, there is equipment moving around the farm constantly. Children may perceive the farm as a gigantic playground if they are not given clear rules to follow about safe play areas.

Clarity and consistency is key. Little ones do not always recognize or understand dangers even if they have been explained before, and developmentally, often cannot apply rules from situation to situation. Because children are not ready to consistently make safe decisions, and as agricultural work and environmental situations are always changing designated play areas should be created.

Play areas should be:

- Designated by boundaries, physical (or visible for older children), and barriers such as fences, gates or shrubs
- Away from car/truck/machine traffic
- Have maintained, soft grass footing
- Away from unstable structures or items leaning against sheds
- Away from loud noises, livestock pens and open water
- Within sight and sound of a responsible adult
- Close to first aid supplies and a washroom

Children 2 to 6 years of age need constant supervision during play. They are slowly developing their muscles and balance. They are learning about spatial relationships and how to solve problems. Children this age are entirely dependent on adults:

- Take questions seriously
- Explain consequences of unsafe play
- Be firm and consistent and promote respect for safety rules
- Explain how and where to contact an adult quickly in case of emergency

Children 7 to 9 years of age have increased mobility and require larger spaces for play. They should have constant or intermittent supervision during play.

- Set and enforce consistent rules and explain consequences of breaking those rules
- Explain how and where to contact an adult quickly in case of emergency

It is extremely important to remember that non-farm children who are visiting will have even less understanding of the risks, so be especially clear when orienting them on the rules. Your own children should not be relied upon to relay those messages.

Play areas evolve as children grow older. For example, children younger than 5 can use relatively small areas whereas older children need larger zones for activities such as riding bicycles. Keep in mind that children tend to use equipment or structures in creative ways, other than for what they were intended!

Although no farm-based play area can be guaranteed safe, effective adult supervision and having a realistic knowledge of a child's developmental capabilities will go a long way.

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For more information, please call Renée Simcoe, FSP Communications Coordinator at (204) 697-1140 or renee.simcoe@manitobafarmsafety.ca.

Please note we are not able to offer interviews in French at this time. Thank you.