



# Agri-News

## 2007 farm fatality numbers decline

Rural Alberta lost 12 people due to farming related fatalities in 2007. Alberta Agriculture and Food's farm safety program works with the Medical Examiners Office to collect statistics on the number of fatalities as well as the causes. This information is used to help the farm safety coordinators decide on program direction and resource development.

"The 2007 statistics indicate a decrease when compared to the average rate of 18 deaths per year in Alberta. This drop was also reflected in the number of farm related injuries in 2007, which was just below 1,000 compared to the average of 1,500 per year," says Laurel Aitken farm safety coordinator, Alberta Agriculture and Food. "It would be great to see this trend continue. Hopefully it is not an anomaly, but an indication that farmers are putting safety first on their operations."

The causes of the 12 farm incident related fatalities in 2007 as reported by the Medical Examiners Office were:

- three rollovers
- two crush incidents (one a round bale , one front end loader)
- one farmers lung
- three falls from horses
- one tractor runaway
- one buried in grain
- one entanglement (under a grain truck)

Of these fatalities, seven involved machinery, emphasizing the need to be very cautious around farm machinery. This includes the operator and also those who are working in close proximity to farm machinery. Even more importantly, it means ensuring children are not around large machinery. One of the 2007 fatalities involved the death of a four-year old boy who was run over by the tractor his father was driving. Children do not understand the hazards of the farm yard and they are in great danger of being run over by operators who do not have a clear view of the immediate surroundings from the cab of a tractor.

## Farm Safety Week March 12 to 18, 2008

"Farm managers are encouraged to ensure all operators are trained in the safe operation of any equipment they will be working on," says Aitken. "Machinery should be well maintained and in good operating condition. This includes ensuring that all guards and shields are in place to protect operators from moving parts."

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Three of the deaths were due to falls from horses, and approximately 40 per cent of the injuries in 2007 were attributed to working with livestock. These injuries tend to be evenly split between horses and cattle.

“Farmers need to give themselves a safety margin when working with livestock. This could mean wearing a helmet when riding horses and making sure someone knows where you are when you go riding,” says Aitken. “When working with cattle, a well maintained cattle handling facility that allows workers to process cattle from a safe vantage point will go a long way towards decreasing the number of kick, stepped on or crush injuries. If a situation requires getting into a pen with livestock, make sure that there is always an escape route and that you are able to get out quickly if you are suddenly faced with an angry or panicked animal.”

Resources are available through Alberta Agriculture and Food’s farm safety program. For further information, visit the website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca) or make a call to the farm safety program at 780-427-4188.

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## Free farm safety resources available

The **Safety Up!** campaign is aimed at new and young farmers aged 17 to 24 years. The idea behind the campaign is to create awareness of the importance of working safely so they can enjoy all the non-work activities that are so important for that age group. One of the campaign lines in this campaign is *Save yourself for the goodtimes*.

Free resources available include posters, such as the ATV rollover poster with the message – *Stay in the game. Wear the gear*, bumper stickers that advise *Farming Happens. Safety Up*, and window clings that advocate *Handle your life with care*. There are also new **Safety Up!** displays, both full size and table top, that are available for use at community events, tradeshow, and other events.

“This campaign also aims at the employers of this age group in an effort to build awareness of the importance of training these young workers,” says Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Edmonton. “A new resource - **Orientation and Training for Young and New Workers** - is currently being developed. A series of 15 new **Safety Up!** fact sheets will be available with the orientation guide. These fact sheets are written specifically for the young worker audience.”

**Farm Safety for Children** is a program that carries the clear message that it is never too early to set the parameters for safe behaviour on the farm. The new *Danger Dog* preschool mini-books provide a great starting point for family discussions on farm

safety. The stories each have a specific, easy to remember lesson, such as *One Seat One Rider*, along with playful rhymes and eye-catching illustrations. The three stories are available, free of charge, on CD in both colour and black and white for farm families, schools, groups and communities. They are in a unique format that allows each story to be printed out on a single sheet of paper and then folded into a four page booklet.

For a full list of other farm safety resources available from Alberta Agriculture and Food, visit the department’s website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety).

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## When lifting – use your brains not your back

Lower back disorders are among the most serious and costly types of musculoskeletal injuries in the workplace. It is estimated that claims associated with back pain cost more than twice the average claim. Yet, in many industries, including farming, workers are expected to do work that requires high-risk activities.

**Manage more than just your back!** is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign that focuses on sprains, strains and falls. The year-long campaign was launched during Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), March 12 to 18, 2008. The campaign’s goal is to encourage agricultural producers to think through their work and find ways to reduce the risk of sprains, strains and falls. The CASW campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

In agricultural work, activities that contribute to lower back disorders include heavy lifting, carrying, forward bending, kneeling, repetitive motions, prolonged driving of such vehicles as tractors, trucks, and other farm equipment that cause whole body vibration, and excessively fast-paced work, among others. Musculoskeletal conditions are the most commonly reported ailments among farm workers and managers. In the U.S., studies have documented that farm workers have a higher prevalence of arthritis than do white collar, blue collar, service and all other workers combined.

In Canada, the leading types of agricultural-related injuries are strains and sprains. This type of injury is most frequently caused by manual overexertion followed by animal-related incidents, machine-related overexertion, and falls. These four causes account for 84 per cent of all strains and sprains injuries sustained in agricultural work, says a study by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP).

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“Once high-risk activities are recognized, then steps can be taken to prevent or control the occurrence and severity of back disorders in agriculture,” explains Marcel Hacault, CASA executive director. “Many of these disorders can be prevented through design considerations of the work environment, redesign of tools, and appropriate worker training.”

Consider the following:

### Job Design

Although no single lifting technique is best for all situations, there are basic guidelines that will be helpful in most instances:

- make loads as compact and light as possible
- only lift loads that can be handled safely – get help if necessary
- when lifting and lowering
  - get a good grip on the object and keep it close to the body
  - place your feet close to the load and lift slowly, smoothly, and mostly by straightening the legs
  - even relatively light loads lifted away from the body can create injurious stress levels on the spine
- lifting and lowering should be restricted to the range between shoulder height and your hips
- minimize reaching forward for an object. Do not lift or lower with the arms extended
- while lifting, always rotate the body by moving the feet, rather than twisting or bending the trunk
- avoid repetitive lifting – alternate the task with other tasks
- use mechanical assistance – lift tables, hoists, and conveyors whenever possible
- reduce whole body vibration by driving vehicles with suspension seats that have appropriated vibration-damping characteristics
- use motor vehicles with good seat position and lumbar support
- maintain flexibility in the workplace to accommodate people of different sizes and shapes

### Education and training

- learn how to lift properly and ensure all workers are also trained
- studies suggest back strength and overall fitness may be associated with a lower risk for developing acute back pain

### Job placement

- identify appropriate jobs for people with various physical capabilities

### Professional medical care

- medical evaluation is especially important for anyone who is at increased risk for developing lower back pain or who already experiences back pain
- medical treatment and rehabilitation, along with job modification, may enable people with mild back pain to continue working

The CFA along with FCC, CASA, and AAFC want to remind Canadian agricultural producers to **Manage more than just your back!** by taking these precautions to reduce the chance of back injury on your farm.

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## Sprains and strains on the bottom line

Injuries resulting from overexertion while lifting, pushing and pulling, are among the most frequent types of farm-related injuries. These kinds of injuries can result in sprains, strains, hernias and lower back pain.

**Manage more than just your back!** is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on sprains, strains and falls. The year-long campaign was launched during Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), March 12 to 18, 2008. The campaign’s goal is to encourage farmers to think through their work and find ways to reduce the risk of sprains, strains and falls. The CASW campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

Next to headaches, medical experts note that back problems are the most common medical complaint. Back pains are also found to be second only to the common cold as the greatest cause of lost workdays. Back injuries alone cost the Canadian economy billions of dollars in worker compensation and lost workdays annually.

“As with almost all health and safety issues, it is less expensive to prevent an injury than it is to recover from one,” says Greg Stewart, FCC president and CEO. “Taking steps now to reduce your workers’ exposure to injuries will pay off in the future.”

Having a farm safety program has many positive outcomes including:

- healthy workers who are free from discomfort are more efficient
- reduced worker’s compensation or disability insurance lost-time injury claims and the associated direct and indirect costs
- improved ability to bring workers back to work if they have been injured

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- less strenuous and more straightforward job tasks makes it easier to train and place workers
- improved ability to retain experienced, knowledgeable and skilled workers
- improved employee satisfaction, morale and well-being
- reduced administrative costs related to claims management and investigations
- increased quality, productivity and profits

Better physical conditioning reduces back injuries by strengthening the muscles that hold the spine in proper posture, as well as lowering the body weight which the back supports. When doing farm work it is important to maintain proper posture. Prolonged sitting or standing, particularly in forward, bent or slouched positions, can cause muscle fatigue, which can lead to leg and back problems. Attempting to lift or otherwise physically move heavy objects, or repetitive moves of even lightweight objects, are other causes of sprains and strains. Slips, trips, falls and jumps also put backs at risk.

One way to reduce back problems is to modify your work practices. Instead of lifting objects manually, consider mechanical means such as the front-end loader of the tractor.

Changing the size, shape and weight of containers or other materials you carry may also help reduce back problems. Many companies that supply materials to farmers have already done this. For example, feed, seed and fertilizer bags in the 45 kg size are no longer common.

Here are some ways to modify work practices so you will remain strong and healthy:

- lift objects carefully, keeping your back straight and use your legs muscles to lift
- lift, push and pull with your legs, not your arms or back
- when changing direction while moving something, turn with your feet, not your waist
- sit in your farm vehicles as you sit in a chair, with your knees slightly above your hips, and provide support for your lower back
- when walking, maintain a straight posture and wear slip-resistant, supportive shoes
- when carrying heavy objects, carry them close to you and avoid carrying them in one hand
- when stepping down from a tractor, or other machinery, step down backwards, not forward

The CFA along with FCC, CASA, and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers to ***Manage more than just your back!*** by taking these precautions to reduce the risk of injury on your farm.

Additional articles on farm safety and the 2008 ***Manage more than just your back!*** campaign are available on the CFA and CASA websites at [www.cfa-fca.ca](http://www.cfa-fca.ca) or [www.casa-acsa.ca](http://www.casa-acsa.ca).

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## From cute to critical – farm animals are dangerous

Most people think of farm animals as docile, cuddly critters that graze and laze in lush green pastures. They tend to overlook the fact that handling animals can be very dangerous and is one of the leading causes of farm-related injuries, particularly sprains, strains and fractures.

***Manage more than just your back!*** is the theme of this year's Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on sprains, strains and falls. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), March 12 to 18, 2008, cautioning farmers on the risks of injuries when working with farm animals. The CASW campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

“Many people can relate to how sore their arm is after taking a dog for a walk on a leash, and the dog was pulling the whole time,” says Bob Friesen, CFA President. “You can just imagine what the strain on your body would be like if a 600 kg horse or cow were to pull on your arm, slam you into a wall, trample on your body, or step on your foot. Handling animals can be very unpredictable and very dangerous, so it is important to be alert to the animal and its surroundings and take every safety precaution available.”

Each year, animal-related incidents are a leading cause of non-machinery deaths and injuries on Canadian farms. While animal-related incidents account for only five per cent of agricultural fatalities, they are involved in about one-third of all injuries, says a study by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP). Bulls, horses and cows are the leading risk factors, followed by calves, steers and pigs.

The study also reveals significant patterns in the types of animal-related incidents. For example, almost half (46.5 per cent) of horse-related injuries happen to women, age 16 to 59, and are



## Make Easter feasts and decorations safe

Golden baked hams and pastel coloured eggs are the quintessential Easter foods. To be sure they are as good to eat as they are to look at, follow these safe food handling and preparation tips.

Eggs not only make a beautiful centrepiece, but are used in many cooked dishes such as stuffed eggs and custard based desserts. “Raw eggs and cooked egg foods are highly perishable and should not be left at room temperature for more than two hours,” says Jill Kartushyn, food safety information officer with the Food Safety Information Society. “For decorated eggs that do not require refrigeration, you may want to use hollowed eggs.”

To hollow an egg, begin by washing your hands with soap and hot water. Wash and dry fresh, uncracked eggs. Using a large, sterilized needle, poke a small hole in the shell at both ends of the egg. Gently make the holes a little larger. Push the needle well into the egg to break the yolk. Holding the egg over a clean bowl, force the contents out using a turkey baster. Rinse the hollowed egg with cold water, and allow to dry before decorating. The contents of the eggs may be stored in the refrigerator for up to four days, and used in recipes in which the eggs will be well cooked.

Hard cooked eggs are also safe to decorate and eat, providing the eggs are not left at room temperature longer than two hours. Be sure to hard cook clean eggs, refrigerate immediately and use only food safe, non-toxic colouring dyes for dyeing uncracked eggs. Store the decorated eggs in a covered container in the refrigerator, or keep the eggs chilled on a bed of ice while on display.

“Hams may be purchased either fully or partially cooked,” says Kartushyn. “Always check the *Best Before Date*, and carefully read the cooking instructions to ensure the ham is prepared safely.”

Fully cooked hams can be heated at 160°C (325°F) until a food thermometer inserted in the centre of the thickest part measures 60°C (140°F). Cook-before-eating hams (fresh cured hams) should be cooked at 160°C (325°F) until a food thermometer inserted in the meat measures 71°C (160°F). If there are no cooking instructions on the package, prepare as a cook-before-eating ham.

If you have any questions or concerns about food safety, contact the Food Safety Information Society toll free at 1-800-892-8333 or visit [www.foodsafetyline.org](http://www.foodsafetyline.org).

The Food Safety Information Society acknowledges the financial support of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture and Food under the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

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## Agri-News Briefs

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### Alberta Clubroot Management Plan

A revised edition of the *Alberta Clubroot Management Plan* is now available from Alberta Agriculture and Food. By the end of 2007, clubroot was present in 10 municipalities around Edmonton and one county in southern Alberta. This disease has the potential to spread to most of the traditional canola growing areas of Western Canada. Information on what clubroot is, how it is spread, best management practices to help prevent its spread, and contact information for the Clubroot Management Committee is available in the revised *Alberta Clubroot Management Plan*. One of the more significant changes to the publication is found in the renamed best management practices section where the list of best management practices was expanded from six to nine points. In this section, the first point on

rotation was changed significantly and has separate rotation breaks for light infestations (three years out of canola or ‘one-in-four’) and moderate to heavy infestations (five or more years out of canola). Also, the equipment cleaning point was expanded. The responsibilities of Agricultural Service Boards were expanded to include active surveys for clubroot, and possible provision of infested locations to potential land occupants as allowed under the *Agricultural Pest Act*. To view this document, go to Alberta Agriculture and Food’s website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications), under *Free Publications*, click on *Crops* then *Oil and seed crops*, or go directly to [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex11519](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex11519).