



# Child safety

### What is the issue?

Keeping children safe in and around the dairy.

### Why is it an issue?

Families often operate and live on dairy farms, so children are a part of the working environment. However, dairies are dangerous places for children.

### What are the consequences of ignoring it?

Children living on or visiting dairy farms can be seriously injured or killed if allowed to play in unsafe working areas, such as near effluent ponds, chemicals, silos, or around animals, machinery and vehicles.

### How safe is your dairy now?

When identifying the hazards to children that exist in and around your dairy, you need to consider everything from the perspective of the size and age of the children on your dairy.

The four main hazard areas and tasks relating to children in and around the dairy are:

- children in unsafe working areas;
- children accessing chemicals, hot water, machinery and effluent ponds;
- children being near moving vehicles or cows; and
- children trying to perform tasks beyond their capacity.

### What can be done right now?

Do you want children or uninvited people in and around the dairy? If not, make it clear to all who work on and visit the farm (including contractors) that it is your farm's policy and reinforce it through signs and induction. The signs can also direct people to where you want them to go or what you want them to do, such as ring a mobile phone number.

You will need to discuss what is appropriate with the family and your workers.

Children usually follow the examples set by their parents and other adults working on-farm. If they see you working safely, they are much more likely to do that themselves.

Apart from setting a good example, you can also use these steps to make and keep the dairy safe for children:



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- *provide children with appropriate and effective supervision at all times*, including visually checking that they are in a fenced-off area when traffic is around;
- ensure visitors supervise their children when visiting the farm;
- create designated 'no go' areas that all children and adults are aware of – this may include the dairy, silo and haystacks;
- store ladders in a locked shed, to stop children using them to climb onto roofs, and up silos and trees;
- keep animals away from play areas and pathways, particularly dangerous or unpredictable ones, such as bulls and working dogs;
- vaccinate and/or worm all animals to minimise the risk from zoonoses such as hydatids;
- stop children from operating or playing with machinery and equipment, including portable powered equipment and extension leads;
- lock chemicals away;
- lock the plant room;
- securely store heavy equipment and hay to stop heavy objects falling on children;
- lock all firearms and ammunition in a separate, immovable cabinet;
- identify taps correctly – red for hot, blue for cold – and keep them secure when not in use; and
- protect children from sun exposure.

### What are the next steps?

With a little more planning, a dairy and its surrounds can be made even safer for children, if you:

- create a safe play area for children near the house that is fenced off from the dairy and traffic areas – the fencing chosen should make it difficult for them to escape and should include a swimming pool-type child-proof gate;
- get rid of or disable disused silos (by cutting off ladders to 2m above the ground) and other unused equipment;
- cover or fence off effluent pits and ponds, including effluent sumps and solids traps, where practical;
- install a safety switch in the house, dairy and workshop electrical circuits;
- fit and maintain guards on all moving parts, shafts, pulleys and belts on plant, equipment and machinery, to prevent access by children and others;
- provide adequate isolation and guarding around hydraulically operated equipment, such as in rapid exit/release herringbones;



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- locate hot water taps out of the reach of children;
- ensure that silos have lockable hatches or covers, and that moveable ladders can be locked away out of reach after use;
- use pictorial safety/hazard signs that are easy for children to understand;
- train older children who help on the farm to do their tasks safely and give them jobs that suit their age, size and ability;
- develop an induction program about the safety rules and hazards on-farm for new employees, contractors and work experience students;
- train your workers to follow the farm's safety rules regarding child safety, which should include contingency arrangements if children are seen in hazardous situations;
- where practical, schedule work that requires the use of plant and equipment during school hours or other times when children are not around;
- teach children water safety techniques (but do not use this as a substitute for constant supervision around water);
- prepare an emergency plan, including a first aid response; and
- ensure that someone on-farm is trained in first aid and that there is a first aid kit available.

### What you should be considering longer term

If building a new dairy, consider locating it away from the house and including an enclosed or separate glassed-off childcare area/office that will allow adults to supervise children while they work.

Locate any new dams or effluent ponds well away from the house and children's play areas.

### What actions are not optional

Children should be under direct supervision at all times in and around the dairy.

When assessing risks in your dairy, consider the risk to children, as well as you and your workers. Ask yourself, for example, could a child access this, or put their hands or fingers through the guard, or reach through the barrier to the chemicals?

You will need to refer to the other guidance material and look at them in the light of children accessing these hazards, whether they have been invited onto the farm or not.

### Where to go for more information

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| Farmsafe Australia Inc.<br>Child safety on farms, including safe play area design | <a href="http://www.farmsafe.org.au">www.farmsafe.org.au</a> |
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| Better Health Victoria<br>Farms and child safety | <a href="http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au">www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au</a> |
| WorkSafe Kids                                    | <a href="http://www.kidsed.org.au">www.kidsed.org.au</a>                     |

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