

Let's talk about farming safety

By Rejean Pommainville

Let's talk about farm safety.

It's a tough topic ? but take it from me ? no one is indestructible and accidents do happen. That's why the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association and Canadian Federation of Agriculture have dedicated March 9 to 15 as Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. It's a one-week commitment to get people talking about preventing injuries, employee training and the role we all play in making sure we work, live and play safely on our farms.

According to a recent article in the Globe and Mail, farming ranks number nine on the list of most dangerous jobs in Canada. That's no surprise to farmers who know too well the hazards and dangerous conditions we face as part of our daily routines. And it's often the routine jobs we don't think of as dangerous, that can be the most hazardous. Something as simple as climbing up the side of a wagon of square bales can change your life forever. That's what I did five years ago during hay season. Something I'd done many times without thinking twice, until I fell almost nine feet from the top of the wagon to the ground. The impact of the fall shattered my heel. After 14 screws, surgery, a few plates and a significant recovery time, I'm back farming. But the accident changed everything for myself and my family. I was a dairy farmer when the accident happened, but then couldn't keep up with the physical demands, so we sold the cows and now run a cash crop operation.

The impact of a farm injury can be devastating, and not just the person injured. It takes a toll on emotions and the economics of a farm. The simple truth is that most injuries are predictable and preventable. Knowing what to look for and how to control hazards on the farm goes a long way to preventing injuries or even death. And in my case, taking the extra time to complete a job safely ? rather than getting caught up in the rush ? is a valuable part of a farm safety plan.

That's why our industry has designated a whole week to this issue. And the Ontario Federation of Agriculture urges Ontario farmers to take the time to reflect on the importance of farm safety. Talk to your family and employees about everyone's role in farm safety. Develop a plan to make your farm a safe place to work. There are plenty of tools available to start the discussion. Visit www.agsafetyweek.ca for tools on how to build your farm safety team, how to talk to your kids about farm safety, and tips for orienting new, young or returning farm workers.

It's a lot easier to talk about how we can work smarter and safer on the farm than to cope with an accident or injury. Farming has a lot of hazards, but implementing a safety plan to prevent or at least reduce injuries will help everyone ? yourself, your family, employees and neighbours.

Start the conversation with your family, friends and employees. The time you invest in making your farm safer will pay off in ways no bottom line can measure. Let's talk about it ? Canadian Agricultural Safety Week.

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