

Farm Safety

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This time of year, typically it is pretty slow in the ag industry. The two main activities are livestock care and equipment maintenance. These everyday runs of the mill things that seem like just another day in the life of farmers and ranchers can be dangerous at times. As your Extension Agricultural Agent, I feel that we all need to be reminded every now and then to please be careful as you tend to your livestock and as you work on your equipment.

According to the 2022 census the average age of Kansas farmers is now 58.2 years of age. This means that slips, trips, and falls become a main concern for producers. I know this warm dry weather helps but at some point, this winter we could see some moisture and freezing temperatures that will increase the likelihood of falling while tending to your livestock. Examples include but not limited to are:

- Slipping in the mud or on ice
- Slipping on the steps getting in and out of the truck or tractor
- Tripping over frozen clods of dirt
- Losing your balance when carrying buckets of feed
- Getting knocked down by livestock trying to get to the feed source

One reason the probability increases is due to freezing temperatures we tend to layer up to stay warm which is necessary when working in winter conditions. The problem with this is the more layers and heavier the clothing you have on the more it will decrease your range of motion and restrict your ability to maintain your balance.

Working in the shop on equipment requires producers and employees to be more proactive when it comes to safety. A wise investment for anyone working in a shop is the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We all know how expensive hospital visits can be. Spending a couple hundred dollars on PPE is less expensive than a trip to the emergency room. PPE items I strongly encourage producers to wear when working in the shop are:

- Safety glasses
- Leather gloves
- Long sleeve shirts
- Jeans
- Solid toe boots with slip resistant soles
- Ear plugs that do not need to be smashed or earmuffs

Along with proper PPE a clean shop is a safe shop. Pick up slip and trip hazards such as spills, extension cords and hoses when not in use, and put tools away when finished. Keep all hot work like welding and cutting away from flammable materials (oil, fuel, cleaners, etc.). OSHA standard is a minimum of 50ft and in a flammable storage cabinet. You also need to check to make sure all electrical equipment is properly grounded and all cords are free from any rips and tears that may expose the wires and all an operator to get shocked or electrocuted.

As the 2024 calendar year ends, I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas this year. Coming up after the first of the year, K-State Research and Extension will be very active in putting on several programs throughout the southeast area. In January, I will be hosting a 4-day coffee shop discussion in 4 different locations across the Southwind District that will be producer led. It is called Growers' Grind. I would love to sit down and visit with you all and answer any questions you may have. Feel free to reach out for more information.

On a final note, we in the ag industry know how precious life can be. One second everything is good, and the next tragedy can strike. Do your part to stay safe out there.

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