

## The farm can be a pretty dangerous place for kids if adults don't provide a safe place for them to explore and learn about the farm.

Children are vulnerable to many of the same hazards as adults who live, visit or work on farms, but they are less capable of understanding the dangers. Although parents cannot completely child-proof a farm, they can make it as safe as possible.

One way to prevent an accident from happening is to create a safe play area. Machinery, equipment, grain, chemicals, structures, and livestock are all associated with potential hazards. Designated play areas protect children by removing them from the work environment.

Let children know what the play area boundaries are and what consequences will be enforced if the boundaries are crossed. Rules are only effective if they are a part of daily life and the consequences of breaking rules are enforced. Explain why off-limit areas are dangerous.

Rules need to be used in conjunction with supervision. Close supervision is an important aspect of keeping young kids safe on the farm. Children often unknowingly put themselves in danger. Kids, especially the very young, may not know how to handle unexpected situations, like an uncovered well or a mother animal with babies. Set restrictions for children and give them with guidelines to keep them safe.

Things to consider when determining a safe play area:

- ▶ Safe distance from traffic and work areas
- ▶ Easily identifiable boundaries; fences are ideal
- ▶ A location that can be easily monitored by adults
- ▶ No dangerous debris
- ▶ Plenty of room to run and explore
- ▶ Safe and age appropriate play equipment

Give children reasons to stay in the identified play area. Provide appropriate play equipment, such as swings, a sand box, or playhouse, which make the play area appealing to children. If the farmstead is more enticing than the designated play area, your efforts may not be effective.

Provide children play equipment that is more appealing than the farm yard and work zones.

