



Ontario Dairyman Lived to tell Farm Safety's Story

By Alana Fearnall for the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

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Stories of people having a major accident and walking away with little to no long-term repercussions are few and far between. Because recovering from a serious injury, and having no lasting effects, is rare.

Brad Hulshof farms alongside his parents, Paul and Thea, and his wife, Lieke, on Hulsdale Farms, a small tie-stall and cash crop operation in Whitchurch-Stouffville, ON, and he knows he is one of those rare, fortunate few.

On May 28th 2012, Hulsdale Farms had just endured two barn renovations, with renovations on a third building just beginning. With spring and the busy season fully in swing and the first cutting of the hay crop about to begin, Hulshof was working another long day to get the forage wagons serviced while Paul worked on the sprayer roughly 40 feet away.

Brad was inside the wagon, oiling the apron along the floor and the front beater. As he reached over the beater his shirt became caught. Unfortunately, the machine was running. His clothing rapidly tangled in the spinning beater, his jeans wrapping tight around his legs. When the pants finally pulled free, Brad's right leg was severely injured. His hamstring was seriously damaged, and he had lost the majority of the muscle. Both his tibia and fibula were seriously damaged. In the heat of the moment, Brad managed to grab the front panel of the wagon but he had to keep holding on so he wouldn't be thrown into the auger.

"All of the sudden, I heard a scream," his father recounts. "I dropped everything and I ran towards him." Brad was able to hold on long enough for Paul to get the tractor shut off. "I pulled Brad out of the forage wagon over my head," says Paul. "I held him up against the tractor tire to keep him off the dirty ground."

At the hospital, doctors determined the damage to Brad's leg to be severe enough to put Brad in a coma for a day and a half. Multiple surgeries were required to fully repair the damage to Brad's leg and fuse his ankle.

Fortunately, Brad's injuries won't have lasting physical effects, but his story is a reminder that an injury can happen in an instant and they can happen to anyone.





“This accident happened to us. It’s always somebody else, but this time it was us,” says Paul, “and that’s a little bit overwhelming.”

As Brad recovered through the summer, he had time to reflect on why he was injured. “The first thing that came to my head was, ‘it was on me’...and that gave me the clarity to move forward and get away from that day.” Reflecting on this incident, Brad says “I could have lost my leg; I could have lost my life. The fact that I am here and the fact that I can still do what I love... I am very lucky.”

Learning of the Hulshof family’s experience, BASF has captured the story in a video and hope to remind farmers everywhere of the potential dangers that come with the job. George Annette, the company’s Manager of Regulatory Affairs, describes the company’s deep commitment to ensuring farmers keep safe practices top of mind. It’s what drives them to partner with organizations like the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association.

Chad Roberts, a volunteer for children’s farm safety days explains in-depth how agriculture safety doesn’t just impact farmers like Brad Hulshof, but directly impacts those around him. “It’s our family, it’s our friends, it’s our neighbors that are working for us,” he says, “so obviously that means a lot to us to bring those folks home the way they went to work.”

No one in the Hulshof family will quickly forget the importance of ensuring every farmer comes home the way they went to work and they sincerely hope that by sharing their story, it will help some other farmer avoid a tragedy. They are all too aware the happy ending to their story really could have easily proven to be a fatal ending instead.

Visit agsafetyweek.ca and click on resources to watch “BASF Managing Safety” and Brad’s story.

