



Keep Your Grandchildren Safe on the Farm

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If you talk to any grandparent, they say that having children was wonderful, but having grandchildren is pure joy. There's nothing better than having a grandchild throw their arms around your neck and whisper "I love you". These young people are a farm's future and a grandparent's legacy. It's important that grandparents understand their role in keeping kids safe on the farm.

The farm is an incredible place for kids to grow up or visit. Nothing is better than being the one to introduce your grandchild to a baby chick, or show them how to successfully pull a carrot on the first try. The farm is a great place to learn about the value of hard work and nothing is more wonderful than experiencing the joys of farming life alongside a grandchild.

Talking about children and farming can be an emotional experience. There is one thing that we can all agree on – the death of even just one child is a horrible tragedy.

Grandparents are vital to the success and safety of their grandchildren. Of course it's hard to say no when grandchildren jump up and down and plead "Oh please Grandpa! Just one ride in the tractor!" However, your legacy depends on keeping these young people safe from harm. So what can you do as a grandparent to keep your grandchildren safe?

First of all, children aren't miniature adults. Even the most advanced eight-year-old is still a child. Children don't have the experience, physical strength or understanding to always make the right choice, handle large equipment or be entrusted with farming jobs. If you'd like to introduce your grandchildren to farming, there are tasks that can teach the fundamentals without endangering their lives. The North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks (NAGCAT) is a great tool to determine such tasks.

Establishing boundaries is essential in making sure that children understand that farming is an occupation and can be hazardous. It's not "mean" to tell children that



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certain areas of the farm are off-limits. Talk to your grandchildren about hazards around the farm, it's a great learning opportunity for the children and a good reminder for you.

Supervision is key in preventing injuries. Even if you have an established play area for your grandchildren, it is no substitute for supervision. A watchful eye can prevent a tragedy.

Children model the behaviour that they see around them. Often grandchildren want to do things just like grandma or grandpa. It's important that they see you perform tasks safely. If you model safe behaviour, your grandchildren are more likely to behave in safe ways too.

Rethink your traditions. If they're risky, build new traditions. Talk about farm equipment, show them safety gear, explore the farm together in a safe and controlled way. You don't have to put a child in a potentially hazardous situation in order to establish traditions with your grandchildren.

Grandchildren are one of life's greatest joys. Being able to see your grandchildren grow and thrive and enjoy the farm is incredibly satisfying. Take the time to teach age-appropriate tasks, establish boundaries, provide supervision, model safe behaviour and build safe traditions. These steps will not only help keep your grandchildren safe, but will help safeguard your legacy.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW) is a public awareness campaign focusing on the importance of farm safety. CASW takes place every year during the third week of March. In 2018, CASW takes place March 11 to 17. CASW is presented by Farm Credit Canada. For more information visit agsafetyweek.ca.



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