



FG | **INSIGHT**

INTELLIGENCE GUIDE: HEALTH & SAFETY



YOUR GUIDE TO

Making sure that in a time of increasing numbers of farm fatalities you take steps to better safeguard your farm and your future

INTRODUCTION

Making health and safety precautions in everyday life a priority can be challenging, not to mention as the clock ticks and the pressure to get things done is increasingly timely.

In farming, it is easy to think you will be okay because you have done the same job hundreds of times before and this often blurs the importance of safety.

But just a few small changes and a different outlook on farm safety could help challenge your mindset and help you practise tasks more safely through thinking ahead, taking time over an 'urgent' job and weighing up the practical implications.

In this guide, you will find facts, figures and advice on all things safety.

LAUREN DEAN
NEWS REPORTER



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BACKGROUND



Planning for the day something goes wrong is often something very few of us admit we do, but is sometimes just the thing we need.

Health and safety in agriculture is something which is often sprung into the limelight, and with an increasing number of fatalities and incidents year-on-year, it is time farmers changed their outlook on how they manage everyday farm life.

Reported fatalities in February 2017 alone peaked at more than four times the average for the same month in previous years.

Farmers are the key players in any farm business, but a lack of safety procedures could render an affected farm business untenable. When it has been worked so hard for, why give it up for the sake of an extra two minutes ensuring you are safe?

Farming remains one of the country's most hazardous industries.

STATISTICS

In 2015/16, 27 farm workers lost their lives in the workplace, despite a decrease on the previous year, and [HSE statistics](#) show figures are levelling.

[National Federation of Young Farmers' Club \(NFYFC\)](#) chairman Ed Ford, farm manager of his 607-hectare (1,500-acre) family farm in South Essex, said he planned to 'pick up the baton' on farming organisations' campaigns surrounding farm safety.

He said great communities were 'shaken far too often' within the agricultural world.

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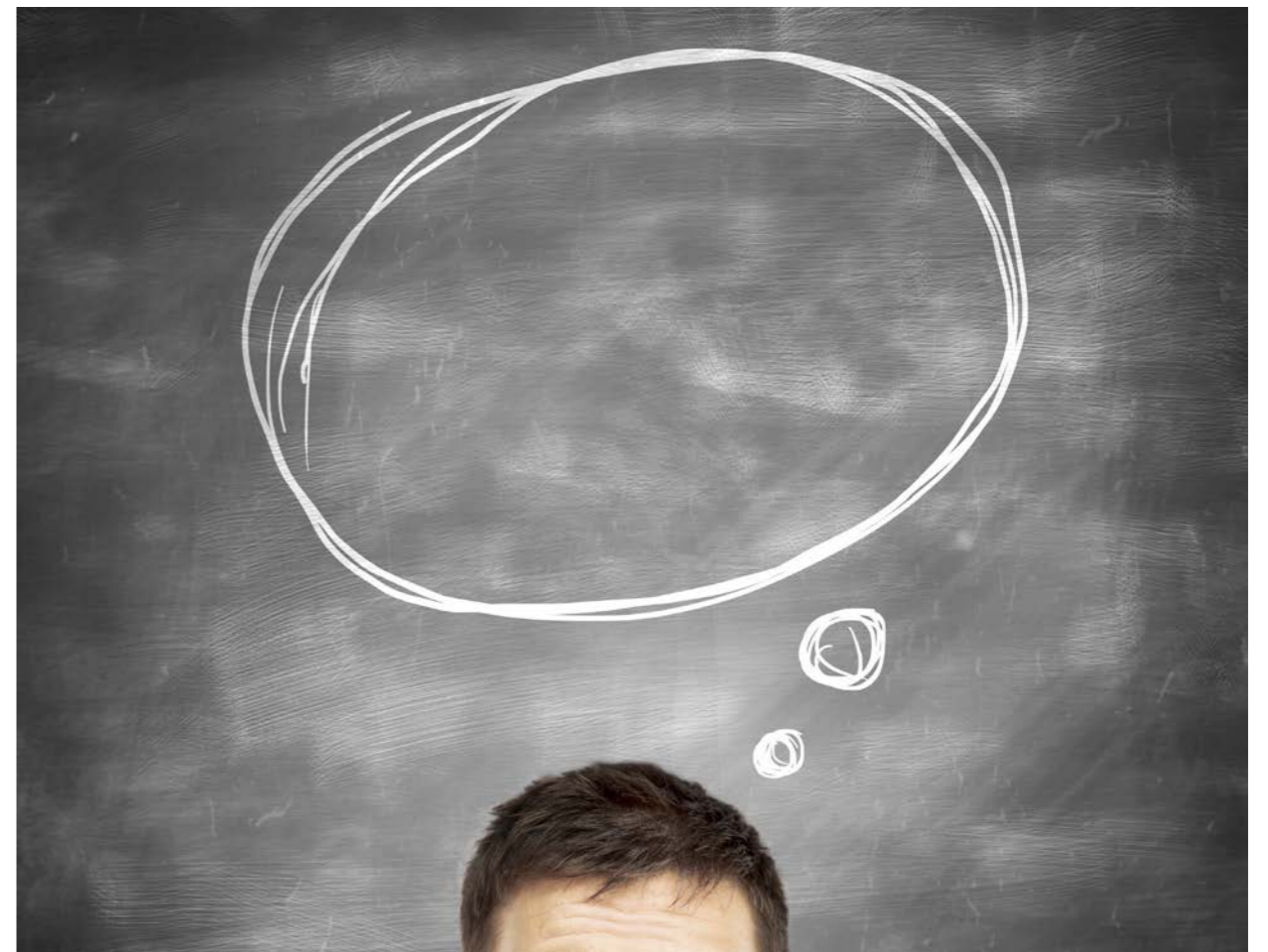
Ed Ford

He said: "Farming employs fewer than 1 per cent of the UK's workforce, but accounts for 15-20 per cent of fatalities.

"Construction was in the same position, but has now turned it around. Why can we not do the same?"

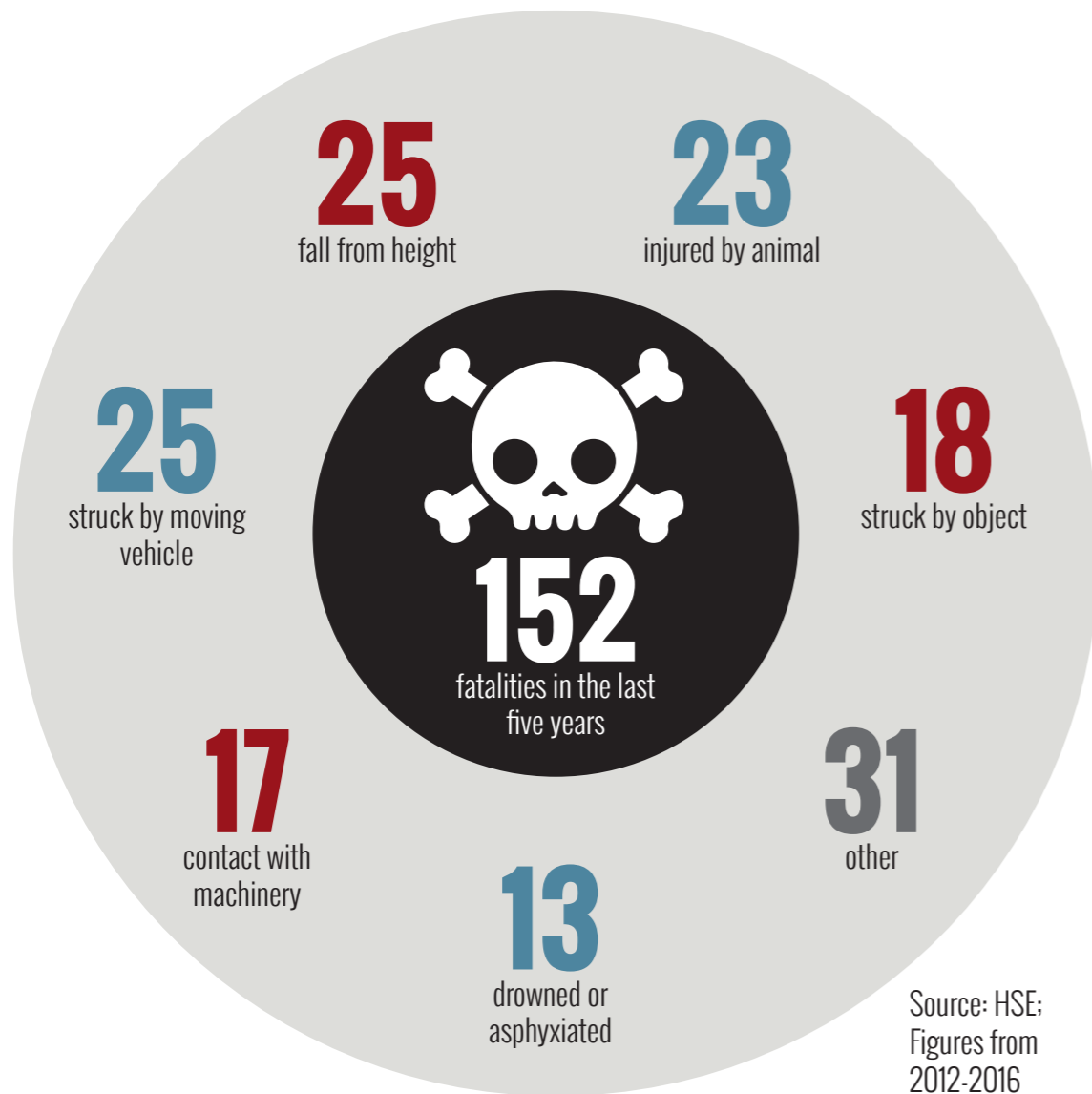
"It is simply not good enough in this day and age."

KEY FACTORS



Causes of death in agriculture remain consistent, with working at height, livestock, farm vehicles and machinery and electricity all key factors in incidents and fatalities.

But the desperation to get a job done should not outweigh safety. Farmers are continuously exposed to ranging patterns of weather extremities and a more threatened workspace, as well as noise, dust and use of technical machinery, but staying safe on-farm can, and should, remain a priority.



FARM VEHICLES



The most common cause of serious and fatal injuries in agriculture surrounds [moving and overturning vehicles](#).

Between 2012 and 2016, 25 farmers were fatally injured by moving vehicles.

Initial reports show incidents often occur when farm vehicles overturn on slopes, including on/near banks, ditches, drains, ramps and uneven/flat ground.

When working with farm vehicles, farmers are encouraged to think of the Safe Stop routine to help prevent accidents and injuries.



THE SAFE STOP ROUTINE

1. Handbrake on
2. Controls in neutral
3. Engine off
4. Remove the key

Alan Plom, [Rural Industries Group](#) vice-chairman, said: “Although the ‘Safe Stop’ procedure is not a new concept and is already included widely in guidance, it is clear from the many deaths and injuries which have occurred that these simple precautions are often being ignored.

“Tractors and loaders have often moved and run over the driver who has dismounted. This is usually due to the handbrake not being applied or being defective due to lack of maintenance.

“We need to rejuvenate and spread the message and encourage operators to take these simple precautions as second nature.”

CASE STUDY

MARK MATHER, NORTHUMBERLAND

Although difficult, safety use for all vehicles should be properly risk-assessed. This even includes those which are often used for leisure.

Mark Mather, 31-year-old mixed farmer from Haugh Head, near Woolder, Northumberland, was keen to highlight the harsh reality of consequences after an accident on his quad bike left him without a leg.

He urged other farmers to ‘think twice before starting a job’.

He said: “My incident put safety awareness to the fore on our own farm and on surrounding farms, when friends and neighbours heard about it.”

When he was 24, and heavily involved on the family farm, he suffered a shotgun blast to the leg when his quad bike overturned while he was trying to shoot crows attacking his barley crop.

Mark was travelling with the double-barrelled shotgun across his lap. It was loaded, but the safety catch was on. After a few shots in a first field, Mark decided to move on to the next. As he turned into the field, the battery powering the twitcher moved slightly and, as he leaned to secure it, the vehicle veered onto a slight bank and overturned. It hit the butt of the shotgun which went off, firing both barrels into his right leg.

He said: “Dad visited me in hospital every day, so his work time was lost. He had to hire in help during the length of time I was unable to work. Because my injury was so severe, it means there are certain aspects of work I can no longer do. I have lost a lot of mobility and working with livestock is not possible. We have had to buy a specially adapted tractor which has been fitted with a left foot accelerator and I have a similarly adapted car and 4×4 vehicle.”

TELEHANDLERS

As with all lifting equipment, work with telehandlers should be properly planned and the risks assessed to ensure the work can be carried out safely.

TOP TIPS WHEN WORKING WITH TELEHANDLERS:

1. Travel with the boom lowered to make sure the machine's centre of gravity and load are as low as possible
2. Carefully choose routes to avoid overhead power lines, steep slopes/gradients and slippery surfaces
3. Adopt the correct driving direction and travelling position
4. Avoid turning/traversing on a slope or gradient; always descend down the gentlest gradient of a slope instead of driving diagonally across it



WORKING AT HEIGHT



Falls are the [second highest cause of fatalities in agriculture](#), despite the potential for most fall injuries to be avoided. Every year, at least eight people in agriculture die falling from a height.

THE LAW SAYS YOU MUST:

1. Avoid working at height where you can; and if not
2. Use work equipment or measures to prevent falls; and if not
3. Use work equipment which minimises distance and consequences of a fall

BALES

Farmers have been warned of the dangers of working with large bales after an increasing number of related fatalities.

Many incidents involve loading bales onto a trailer, or during/after stacking. The HSE said farmers must always be aware of hazards when handling or stacking round or square bales.

Adrian Hodkinson, HSE head of agriculture health, urged farmers to remember bales are ‘deceptively heavy’.

He said: “Big bales weigh more than 600kg – they are heavy things. It is important they must always be handled by mechanical equipment rather than manually.

“If you want to break up for use in feed or bedding, they must be carefully destacked and only handled when safely on the ground.”

[Work at Height Regulations 2005](#) apply to employers and those in control of any work at height. Regulations state work must be properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people.

WORKING ON A ROOF

Carrying out a job on a roof can often seem straightforward and relatively easy, but most types of roofs will be fragile.

It is important to always consider first if it is really necessary to access the roof – does the work need to be done, or could it be done in some other way?

If access to a roof is necessary, you must: plan the work; set enough time aside to do the work; and take account of weather conditions.

LADDERS

If looking to carry out a short task, perhaps of a few minutes, a ladder can be considered, but you should never work from a ladder if there is a safer way of doing the job. If scaffolding or a suitable working platform is available and appropriate, a ladder should be a last resort.

For planned or regular work at height, you should use a fully integrated and properly constructed working platform.

LIVESTOCK

Incidents involving cattle are one of the biggest causes of on-farm fatalities and injuries and warning bells have often rung high as reminders cattle can be unpredictable, no matter how well you may know them.

It is important to remember to always stay safe by ensuring handlers are well-trained, risk aware and can operate equipment in a calm and competent manner.



HANDLING CATTLE

When handling cattle, all farmers must have:

- Proper handling facilities, kept in good working order
- A race and a crush suitable for animals
- Trained and competent workers
- A rigorous culling policy for temperamental animals

BULLS

It is often easy to overlook the fact bulls can be temperamental animals, but many incidents happen because bulls are not treated with respect.

Remember, a bull can kill you when he is being playful just as easily as when he is angry.

If a bull is kept in a field where there is a public right of way, the public must be warned.



Sarah Slade, [CLA](#) access adviser, said beef bulls of more than 10 months old can only be kept in fields crossed by public rights of way if they are kept with cows and heifers. If so, you should put up a sign which is clear and concise, for instance ‘bull in field’.

She said: “A suitable sign showing there is a bull in the field is a yellow triangle with a black band around the outside and a bull’s head in black in the middle.

“The sign should only be temporary and should be removed when there is no longer a bull in the field.”

HSE inspector Georgina Speake added: “Farmers must be aware of the risks to people who are entitled to use a public footpath. Farmers and landowners should consider how this risk can be reduced, such as using fencing, signs, temporary bypasses or moving cows with calves away.”

“**THE SIGN SHOULD ONLY BE TEMPORARY AND SHOULD BE REMOVED WHEN THERE IS NO LONGER A BULL IN THE FIELD**”

Sarah Slade

ELECTRICITY



Contact with electricity can kill, cause serious burns and disabling injuries, with many farmers often experiencing ‘near-misses’.

Farm machinery is getting bigger and taller, increasing the chances of a cable strike.

The safest option is to avoid overhead power lines (OHPLs) altogether, but if you have to work near them, plan the job carefully and use safe systems to work.

REDUCING THE RISKS

Risks can be reduced if the following activities are not carried out within a horizontal distance of at least 10 metres (20ft) from OHPLs:

- Stacking materials, for example, bales, fertiliser bags or potato boxes
- Erecting temporary structures, for example, polytunnels
- Folding sprayer booms
- Tipping trailers or lorries with tipping bodies
- Operating material handlers or lift trucks
- Working on top of combines or other high machinery
- Moving ladders, irrigation pipes or scaffolding
- Tree work

Electricity can arc (jump gaps) in certain circumstances when equipment or machinery gets close enough. You do not need to make contact with OHPLs to receive an electric shock.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU COME INTO CONTACT WITH AN OHPL

1 Try to drive clear: electrocution is possible if anyone touches both the machine and the ground at the same time; if you need to get out, jump well clear so no simultaneous contact is made between you, the vehicle and the ground

2 If part of a vehicle or load is in contact with an OHPL, the operator should remain in the cab and inform the distribution network operator immediately; you should display the number in the cab and keep it on your mobile phone

3 Do not return to the vehicle until the owner of the line has confirmed the line has been de-energised and made safe

4 Stay clear and ensure you warn others not to approach

JIM CHAPMAN, WARWICKSHIRE

Planning for use of machinery can sometimes be overlooked, but when it comes to caution and care, safety procedures are vital.

Jim Chapman, [Farm Safety Ambassador](#) and Warwickshire farmer, said any risk 'is not worth it'.

And this means, he claimed, choosing safety over saving an extra couple of minutes.

He said: "If you are tempted to rush an urgent job, stop, take stock and measure the cost of cutting a safety corner against the risks of losing a limb or even your life.

"The risk taken is not worth it, because there can be no going back."


And Jim is speaking from experience. As a 23-year-old, he offered to help a friend process green waste.

After an initial 'frustrating' beginning to the day, with the first two machines failing to work, Jim started work to empty water from underground storage tanks using a tractor and a vacuum tanker.

He said: "I set up all the machinery and had everything running satisfactorily.

"The two groundmen who were





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Jim Chapman

helping with the job then asked if I thought the pump was working properly, as no water was being sucked up through the pipe into the tanker.”

Jim got down from the tractor, but left it running while he checked the operation. He went to the pump-end of the vehicle and leaned over the tractor from the offside and put his hand against the exhaust.

He said: “If air was blowing through, the system was working.

“I was wearing a fluorescent safety vest at the time and I remember starting to pull my hand away. As I did, the PTO shaft on the machinery caught the corner of the vest and then what happened initially seemed to be in slow motion.

“I remember putting out my hands to resist being pulled in and get myself out of the machine, but in a split second, the vest was wrapped around the shaft.

“I was flung from where I had been standing right over the right over the top of the tractor. The PTO shaft had ripped all

my clothing, shirt and jumper and my left arm completely off.”

After being rushed straight to surgery when arriving at the hospital, surgeons were unable to restore Jim’s arm.

“That morning, the work plan had not gone well due to delays caused by machinery problems. As a result, I could have been less cautious and slightly careless, as I was keen to get on with the job in view of the earlier time lost.

“At first I was very headstrong. I was determined things would be the same as before the accident and I carried on with contracting work with the help of my brother.

“Some farmers still gave us work, as I could still drive a tractor, but eventually work dropped off and people stopped ringing me.”

Since the incident, Jim has become an avid supporter of farm safety, having been awarded an MBE for services to farm safety and a Nuffield Scholarship to visit other countries in an attempt to get some understanding of the global issue of farm safety.

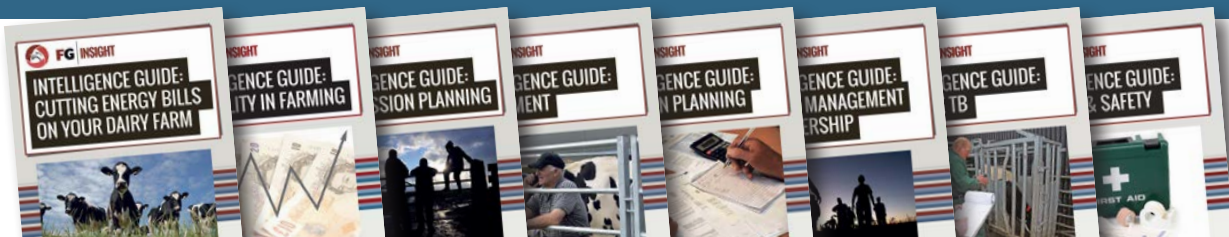
MACHINERY OPERATION HAZARDS

- **Overturning**
- **Electrocution**
- **Unsecured loads falling from height, for example, bales**
- **Unsafe procedures**
- **People falling from height**
- **Unintended movement of machines**

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