



COMMENTARY

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Spring Ahead to Protect Farm Children

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Spring is in the air, and that's got many farmers finalizing their plans for all of the work that comes after the thaw. In between planning field work and wondering what Mother Nature may throw at us this year, take some time to consider how to better protect farm children this year. As the weather gets warmer, they're much more likely to be spending time outside and near your workplace. While the farm can be a great place to raise a family, it also requires some extra precautions to ensure their safety.

The good news is that there are resources available to help educate your family about farm safety and funds available to help create safer play areas. The provincial government offers a grant to create an enclosed play area on the farm that will help to keep kids away from machinery, livestock, and other potential dangers. When planning your work schedule for this spring, take a look at the grant information (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/farmsafety.html>) and find some time to invest in building on-farm safety.

This is just one part of a bigger puzzle to help improve on-farm safety for farm children. Parents need access to flexible, affordable child care in rural areas – especially during very busy seasons. Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) has been lobbying for improvements and, while some progress is being made, more is needed to make sure that this important support is available.

But safety precautions shouldn't just apply to the young people on a farm. In the rush to get spring work underway, we must also take the time to find the safest way to do our jobs. Sometimes that means just carrying a cell phone out to the field, letting someone know where we are, or taking a brief break to hold off tiredness. We can also prevent and minimize risks by taking the right precautions, and there are a number of resources and ideas available online or from the province in this area.

This year, KAP encourages all farmers to spend as much time planning for a safe season as you do for a productive season.