

Safe Play Areas

Many times the agricultural worksite and the home are in close proximity. With the school year wrapping up there is an increased need for child care or supervision at home. Educating children about agriculture and engaging them in the process can be a great way to enhance the summer vacation for the whole family. Check out the North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks for guidance on appropriate activities for kids of all ages; <http://www.nagcat.org/nagcat/>.

When children are not involved in age-appropriate tasks, it is important to designate a safe play area. The *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms-Second Edition* developed by the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety defines a safe play area as follows:

The play area location on a farm should be:

- Designated by boundaries or physical barriers such as fences, gates or shrubs
- Away from car/truck/other vehicle traffic
- Away from hazards such as machinery or unstable structures
- Away from loud noises
- Free from open water, where children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water
- Adequately shaded from sun
- Adequately sheltered from wind, dust or hazardous airborne particles
- Protected with a strong barrier separating children from farm animals
- Within sight and sound of a responsible adult
- Close to first aid, hand washing and toilet facilities
- Small or large enough to match the amount of space needed to play safely
- Easily and regularly maintained with grass mowed and snow removed
- Where there is minimal risk of snakes, fire ants or other "critters" (e.g. ticks, mice, mosquitoes)

The play area equipment on a farm should be:

- Appropriate for the ages of children who are using it
- Spaced with other pieces of play equipment to allow for minimum risk of injury
- Free from entrapment hazards, spaces greater than 3 ½ inches but less than 9 inches that can prevent withdrawal of a child's body or head
- Without bolt ends, edges, or other protrusions that extend beyond 1/8 inch, which can catch strings or clothing worn around a child's neck, or cause skin injury
- Absent of lead-based paint, creosote and chromated copper arsenate
- Devoid of pinch, crush, shearing, and sharp edge hazards
- Surfaced with appropriate ground material that is maintained at an appropriate depth to cushion a fall
- Surrounded by a use zone that includes appropriate ground surfacing extending beyond the area just beneath the piece of play equipment
- Smooth to avoid wood or metal splinters
- Constructed of a material that does not absorb excessive heat from sun exposure
- Securely anchored to prevent overturns that can crush a child
- Played with as the designer/manufacturer intended
- Well maintained by an adult

Safe play should include:

- Competent supervision
- Changing play opportunities and equipment as children grow and develop
- Wider boundaries or zones for older children
- Safety rules for all children, including additional explanation for visitors
- Consequences for children who break safety rules



Click the link below to view the full version *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms-Second Edition*.

<http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/proxy/MCRF-Centers-NFMC-keyprojects-booklet-safeplay-v2.1.pdf>