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# SAFETY ON THE FARM

## Operating a Tractor - Topic 1

**Tractors are the main cause of accidental deaths on farms. Over the years, many farm workers and others living on or visiting farms, have been killed or seriously injured falling from moving tractors, being run over by tractors, or being crushed when a tractor rolls sideways or backwards.**

### **Spot the hazard**

Regularly check for hazards relating to tractors, attached implements and field conditions. Hazard areas could include mechanical parts, operator training, other people, work procedures, unsafe jacking, climatic conditions, chemicals used, uneven terrain, and any other potential causes of an injury or a hazardous incident. Keep a record to ensure identified hazards are assessed and controlled.

### **Assess the risk**

Once a potential hazard has been identified, assess the likelihood of an injury or hazardous incident occurring. For example, risk to children playing near a tractor will vary, depending on what the tractor



indicating how close they are to the tractor and whether the operator knows they are there.  
Consider ways of minimizing risk.

## **Make the changes**

Here are some ways of improving tractor operator safety:

- Read and follow safety procedures in the manufacturer's manual.
- Ensure an approved cab or roll-over protective structure (ROPS) is fitted.
- Fit and use a seatbelt on tractors with ROPS.
- If there is a risk from falling objects, fit a fall-on protective structure (FOPS).
- To reduce risk of back strain, fit a seat with side restraints and a backrest.
- Wear hearing protection, and remember, not all tractor cabs are sound proof.
- Keep children away from tractors and machinery.
- Remove starter keys when tractors are not in use.
- Have an up-to-date maintenance schedule.
- Follow safe maintenance and jacking procedures [Top \(See\)](#)
- Ensure the operator is properly trained for each type of tractor work.
- Always mount and dismount on a tractor's left side - to avoid controls.
- Adjust the seat so all controls are safely and comfortably reached.
- Keep all guards in place, including the power take-off (PTO).
- Operate the self-starter from the operator position only.
- Never carry passengers.

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## When operating a tractor

Drive at speeds slow enough to retain control over unexpected events.

Reduce speed before turning or applying brakes.

Watch out for ditches, logs, rocks, depressions and embankments.

On steep slopes, without a trailed implement, reverse up for greater safety.

Engage the clutch gently at all times, especially when going uphill or towing.

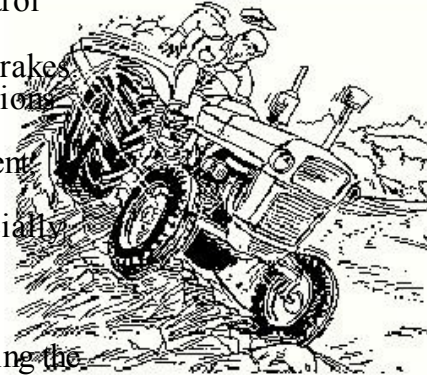
Use as wide a wheel track as possible on hillsides and sloping ground.

Descend slopes cautiously in low gear, using the motor as a brake.

Never mount or dismount from a moving tractor.

Ensure the park brake is on and operating effectively before dismounting.

Take short breaks regularly when working long hours.



## When towing implements

Fit attachments according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Always attach implements to the draw bar or the mounting points provided by the manufacturer.

Never alter, modify or raise the height of the draw bar unless provided for by the

**Regularly check** safety pins on towed lift-wing implements, to ensure they are not worn. Ensure all guards on towed implements are in place before operating. Never hitch above the centre line of the rear axle, around the axle housing or to the top link pin. Never adjust or work on implements while they are in motion. Never attach implements unless the PTO shaft is guarded. When parking, always lower the three point linkage and towed implement.

### **To avoid strain injury**

Adjust the tractor seat for back support and comfort. When buying a tractor, ensure seating is safe and comfortable. Check seat height, seat depth, back rest height and angle, fore and aft movement, seat tilt, firm padding, partial pivoting (if you have to spend long periods looking behind you), and vibration-absorbing suspension. Dismount every hour or so, and spend 5 or 10 minutes doing something active. Plan for your next tractor to include suitably low steps, hand grips, adequate doorway and space, and a safe mounting platform. Dismount by climbing down - not jumping down - and use each provided

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## Tractor Maintenance - Topic 2

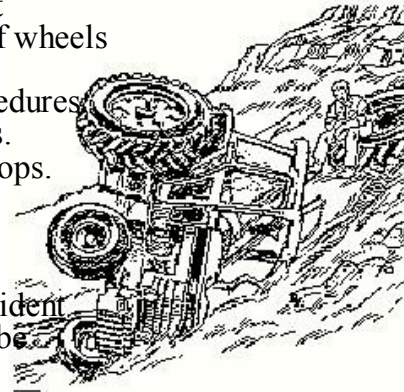
**People have been killed and seriously injured doing maintenance and repairs to farm tractors. Major hazards can occur when tractors are jacked and wheels are removed without safe working procedures. These risks are magnified on soil. Regular workshop maintenance of farm tractors and trailed implements can prevent hazardous incidents in the field.**

### Spot the hazard

When planning tractor maintenance, check the right equipment is available for safe jacking, removal of wheels and other tasks. People doing the job should be experienced, and there should be agreed safe procedures. Heavy lifting and carrying can cause strain injuries. Children should be kept away from tractor workshops. Field repairs present specific injury risks.

### Assess the risk

The greater the risk of an injury or a dangerous incident occurring, the more urgent the need for changes to be made to minimize or eliminate the risk.



### Make the changes

Here are some ways of improving tractor maintenance safety.

Routinely adjust brakes, clutches and drives, according to the manual.

Ensure steering, exhaust system and brakes are in top condition.

Stop the motor before refueling, servicing or greasing and, if possible, wait until the engine is cold before refueling.

Never remove or replace belts while pulleys are under power.

Keep steps and working platforms free of grease and oil to avoid slips and falls.

If the engine overheats, allow time for it to cool off before removing the radiator cap.

### **When jacking a tractor**

Jack on a flat surface, ideally a concrete floor.

Avoid working alone. Ask somebody with training and experience to help.

Refer to the manufacturer's manual on safe jacking, or seek professional advice.

Where jacking points are not identifiable, jack from the lowest possible point.

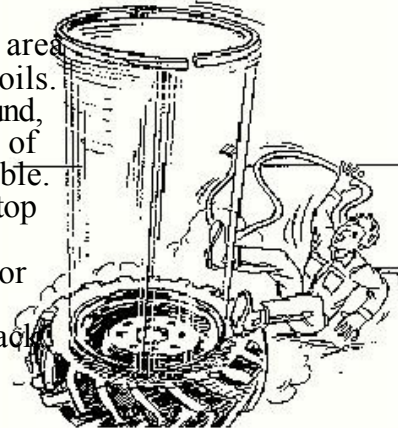
Use jacks that comply with applicable standards.

Use vehicle stands that comply with applicable standards, and are designed for the load to be suspended.

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## Blocks and chocks

Ensure wooden blocks for jacking are of hardwood, e.g. jarrah or karri, with a surface area that will support the tractor's weight on soft soils. Chock all wheels that will remain on the ground, using big wooden chocks at the front and rear of each wheel. Don't use rocks; they're too unstable. Chock all wheels on articulated vehicles to stop them twisting sideways during jacking. Before jacking, apply brakes, place in gear - or automatic park - and switch ignition off. Stay clear of the tractor while operating the jack.



## When removing wheels

Loosen wheel nuts before the wheel is off the ground, to avoid any movement that could dislodge the tractor. Before removing a tractor tire from a rim, release all water and air pressure. Use safety equipment and procedures to avoid serious injuries from split rims. Never jack more than one wheel off the ground at a time in the field. If both rear wheels have to be removed, work on a flat, level concrete floor, in the workshop. When removing rear wheels, ensure the front wheels are immobilized by fixing wedges between axle and body.

## Farm chemicals: Pesticide Spray - Topic 4

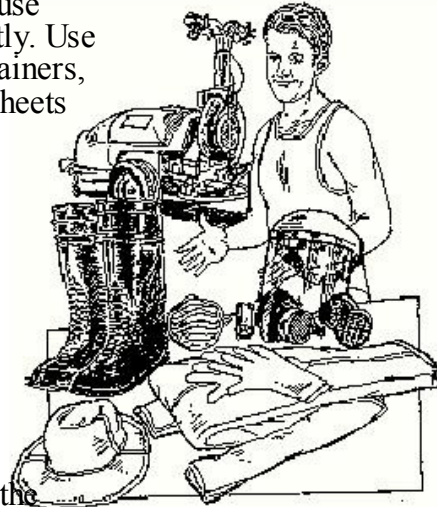
Most pesticide sprays are hazardous, and can cause injury or harm if not handled and applied correctly. Use them in accordance with labels supplied on containers, and with the more detailed material safety data sheets (MSDSs), available from your supplier.

### Spot the hazard

Read labels and MSDSs carefully. Check spray equipment, safe handling procedures, protective equipment, operator training and awareness, and supervision of new and young workers.

Be aware pesticides enter the body through:

absorption through skin contact, specially the eyes;





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inhalation of fumes, vapors and dusts;  
accidental swallowing while eating, drinking or smoking.

### **Assess the risk**

Assess the effectiveness of protective equipment, decanting, spray and washdown procedures, operator training and safe practices. Assess also the likely risk of contamination or poisoning occurring, and the severity of harmful effects to the operator. Finally, assess the effectiveness of proposed new safety measures.

### **Make the changes**

Here are some ways of improving farm spray safety:

Use the least toxic pesticide available for effective control of insect, fungus or plant, as the case may be.

Ensure only the recommended rate of pesticide is used.

Wear protective clothing and equipment as described on the label and MSDS.

Prepare only enough chemical for immediate use.

Keep a record of each use and the results.

Ensure equipment works properly and does not leak.

Cover feed and water containers near areas where livestock are grazing;

Don't eat, drink or smoke while pouring, mixing or spraying.

Don't pour concentrated pesticide into tanks above shoulder height.

Avoid working alone if you are using a highly toxic pesticide; or have some form of mobile communication.

## **Spraying**

Spray with minimal drift and preferably in low wind conditions.

Never spray in high wind conditions.

Use mechanical suction to transfer pesticides to spray tank.

A vortex system can be used to mix pesticide concentrate with water before filling the spray tank.

Prevent nozzles blocking by using correct filters and pesticide formulation. Ensure water and equipment are clean.

Clear blocked nozzles by using a soft bristle brush or compressed air. Never suck or blow nozzles to clear them.

## **Clean up**

Thoroughly clean all spraying and protective equipment, where run-off will not create a hazard or contaminate the environment.

Wash work clothing separately from domestic clothing, or use disposable clothing.

Wash yourself well after a spray operation.

After handling pesticides, wash hands with soap and water before eating, drinking, going to the toilet or smoking.

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## Take precautions

Provide a first aid kit that includes a towel, clean clothing, a resuscitation mask for expired air resuscitation, disposable eye wash bottle and eye wash solution, soap, nailbrush, and clear instructions on what to do with this equipment.

Keep fresh water close by for washing.

Advise someone where you will be working and how long you intend to be gone.

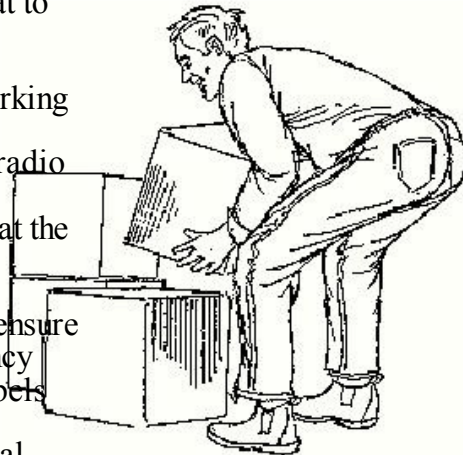
Otherwise ensure you have a two-way radio for emergency calls.

Have a family member or other person at the farm attend first aid classes.

Check the labels, MSDSs or other safe handling guides for your pesticides, to ensure you have the correct antidotes, emergency equipment and facilities required by labels and MSDSs.

Stop work immediately and seek medical attention if there is any sign of muscular spasm, blurred vision, excessive saliva or difficulty breathing. Suspect pesticide poisoning with any of these symptoms.

If regularly using pesticides, an annual medical examination is recommended before and after the spraying season, and more frequently with some chemicals.



**For skin contact: Wash with soap and water, and rinse with clean water. Remove any contaminated clothing, and seek medical advice.**

**For eye contact: Hold eye open under running water for 15 minutes. Seek medical advice.**

**For swallowing: Ring the Poisons Information Center.**

## **Manual Handling - Topic 8**

Manual handling or strain injuries can keep farm workers away from work for weeks at a time. They can happen from lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, lowering, holding or restraining.

Injuries occur through:

increased wear and tear or damage, e.g. from intense or strenuous manual activity; gradual wear and tear, e.g. from frequent or prolonged periods of activity (continuous handling of hay bales); heavy or awkward lifts (lifting heavy machinery onto a ute); sudden damage, e.g. from unexpected movement (carrying a heavy object over uneven ground, stumbling, tripping or falling).

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## **Spot the hazard**

Conduct safety audits of all farm jobs involving manual handling. Take note of heavy, stressful, awkward or repetitive activities. Check injury records to see which activities have caused most strain injuries. Look for difficult handling jobs that could be made easier.

## **Assess the risk**

Assess the likelihood of each identified hazard resulting in injury or harm. Use injury records to assess the potential risk of various tasks. If you consider there is a significant risk of serious injury, look for the best way to minimize the risk.

## **Make the changes**

Here are some suggestions to help you make the changes:

- Plan ahead. Consider the safest possible ways of lifting, carrying, holding, lowering, pushing, pulling.
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks.
- Avoid double handling.
- Use mechanical aids.
- Carry out a safety check first.

## **Lighten the load**

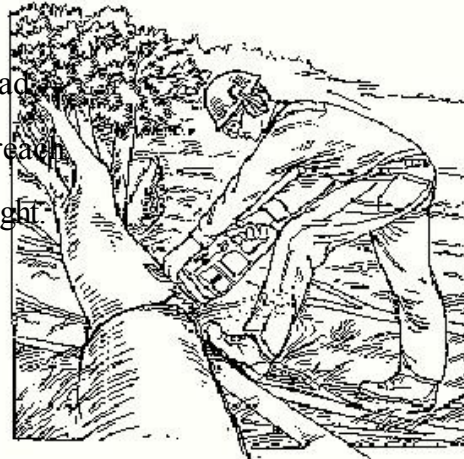
Where possible, choose light-weight materials.  
Divide heavy loads into smaller loads.  
Purchase in smaller bags.  
Half fill containers.  
Get help to share the load.

### **Reduce bending, twisting, reaching**

Point your feet in the direction of the load you are carrying.  
Keep tools and equipment within easy reach.  
Build benches to waist height.  
Keep frequently used items at waist height.

### **Follow a safe procedure**

Plan the handling.  
Clear the way.  
Wear appropriate protective clothing.



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## **Correct body techniques**

When lifting a load from ground level, bend knees, keep back straight, keep load close to your body, lift with leg muscles, support forearms with knees, and support the load with your body.

When lowering a load, use leg muscles and lower the load by bending your knees, not your back. Where possible, support forearms on knees.

## **Avoid muscle fatigue**

Warm up first.

Take frequent breaks.

Change jobs to use different muscles.

Gradually get used to the job.

Ensure the tractor seat is well sprung.

Adopt good posture when standing or sitting at a job.

Instead of crouching or squatting for low jobs, use a small stool.

## **Mechanical aids**

Consider using:

trolleys for heavy bags, drums or other weighty, awkward items;  
special trolleys to move and tilt 200 litre drums;

picket drivers for fencing; \*  
small mobile hoists or forklifts;  
a fixed hoist on the utility or truck;  
mobile ramps or skids for loading and unloading trucks or utes;  
crow bars, barrows, pulleys, hooks and jacks.

#### \* Fence picket injuries

Steel fence pickets can inflict nasty injuries on workers using metal pipe drivers.

Unless the pipe section is long enough, the picket can dislodge at the top of the upstroke, and the downstroke can bring the worker's arm down on the picket.

Make sure the pipe section is long enough to minimize these risks. Minimum pipe length should be 600 mm. Take into consideration the size and strength of the worker.

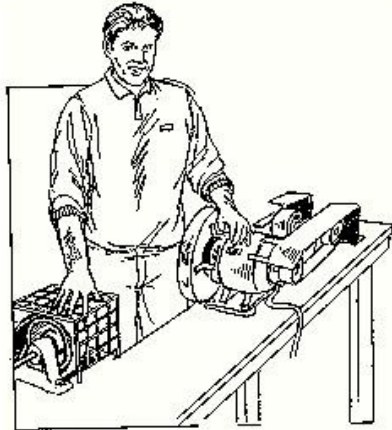
Safe procedure should include instruction and training to ensure the worker's upswing does not exceed the length of the pipe.



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## Machinery Guarding - Topic 10

**Manufacturers of machinery and equipment are today legally required to make sure dangerous parts are safely guarded so that operators and others are protected from injury.**



But old farm machinery is sometimes poorly guarded. Extra moving parts like wheels and pulleys may have been added for various other uses. Original guarding may have been removed for maintenance and not put back.

There may be times when an operator may need to reach over, under, around or into a machine while it is running. If so, any moving parts or other hazards must be appropriately guarded from human contact.

A guard may be any shield, cover, casing, or physical or electronic barrier, intended to prevent contact between a hazardous machine part and any part of a person or a person's clothing.

### Spot the hazard

Some of the hazards associated with machinery likely to cause injury include:

rotating PTO and other shafts (e.g. joints, couplings, shaft ends and crank shafts);  
 gearing (including friction roller mechanism), cables, sprockets, chains, clutches, cams  
 or fan blades;  
 the run-off point of any belt, chain or cable. All belts are hazardous, especially if joints  
 are not kept smooth.  
 keyways, keys, grease nipples, set-screws, bolts or any other projections on rotating  
 parts, any pulley or flywheel that incorporates any openings, spokes, protrusions, etc, that  
 render it anything except totally smooth;  
 any crushing or shearing points, e.g. augers and slide blocks, roller feeds, conveyor  
 belts and wheels and track gear that incorporate protrusions, spokes, etc, that are adjacent  
 to an operator's position (standing platform, seat, footrest) or passenger's seat;  
 rotating knives, blades, tines or similar parts of power driven machines that operate in  
 or near the ground or engage crops;  
 any machine component that cuts, grinds, pulps, crushes, breaks or pulverizes farm  
 produce;  
 hot parts of any machine where the surface temperature exceeds 120C in normal  
 operation.

### **Assess the risk**

Once a hazard has been identified, assess the likelihood of the hazard resulting in injury to the operator or any other person, and the likely severity of any injury or harm. For more information

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*see "Plant in the Workplace: A Guide to Managing Risks from Plant in the Workplace for Employers and Employees" (National Occupational Health and Safety Commission).*

## **Make the changes**

### **Ensure machinery guards:**

- are designed in a practical way to protect the user but allow ready access for operation and maintenance;
- are always in place on dangerous parts of machinery unless they are, by any reasonable definition, located out of reach of users, operators or bystanders;
- are conveniently placed so that users, operators and service and maintenance people are less likely to remove them permanently;
- are strong and durable enough for the machine part they cover;
- protect users, operators and bystanders against burns caused by hot parts;
- are ventilated where applicable to avoid the machine over-heating;
- are not removed until the machine is stopped and isolated with a tagged lock-out switch, and all sources neutralized, e.g. pressure in the hydraulic, or LPG gas line.

## **Children and machinery**

Children on or visiting the farm are often at risk of being injured by machinery. Minimize the risks, teach your children about safety on the farm, and get them to tell their friends that:

Agricultural machinery is not a playground. Make sure guards are on machines,

Especially when children's fingers and hands sometimes reach into guarding designed for adult hands.

## **Safe procedure**

Stick to a safe procedure for machinery guarding.

For maintenance jobs, have a checklist procedure ensuring guarding is safely replaced. Use approved lock-out and tag devices to prevent machinery being accidentally started during maintenance.

Redesign work processes to minimize risk from moving parts.

Get rid of machinery and eliminate work processes that can't be made safe.

Replace unguarded machinery with safer machinery.

Have guards designed and fitted for improvised machinery.

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## Heat Stress - Topic 11

The effects of heat stress range from simple discomfort to life threatening heat stroke. Heat causes increased sweating which leads to loss of body fluid and then reduced heat tolerance. This results in reduced capacity for work, inefficiency, and increased risk of hazardous incidents.

Heat stroke, a rarer condition, is when sweating stops and body heat rises. This is a life threatening condition, and requires immediate medical attention.

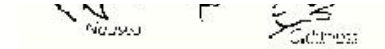
### Spot the hazard

Heat stress hazards can occur through:

- high temperatures,
- high humidity,
- lack of air movement,
- unsuitable clothing,
- a person's lack of acclimatization,
- hot protective clothing or equipment,
- physical activity,
- radiant temperature of surroundings.

### Warnings





Warning signs of heat stress are:

tiredness,  
headache,  
nausea,  
loss of concentration,  
muscle cramps,  
dizziness.

### **Assess the risk**

Using weather forecasts, availability of shade, knowledge of the job ahead, and an awareness of individual workers' heat tolerance, assess whether the day's tasks could cause heat stress or heat stroke. Consider ways of minimising or eliminating the risks.

### **Those most at risk**

Working in a hot environment is more likely to adversely affect people who are:

overweight,  
medically unfit,

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unacclimatised to heat,  
unhealthy, particularly if suffering from heart disease,  
dehydrated, whether from alcoholic hangover, failure to replace salt and water lost in sweat, or from medically prescribed diuretic drugs.

## **Make the changes**

### **Indoors**

Open windows and doors to allow natural cross ventilation, or install air conditioning if practicable.

Provide fans or ventilators to lower temperature and increase air movement.

Insulate roof, walls or heat making equipment.

Duct hot steam and gases outside to help reduce humidity and lower temperature.

Install extraction ventilation around heat producing equipment.

### **Outdoors**

Wear cool cotton clothing to allow air circulation and evaporation of sweat.

Use a broad spectrum sunburn cream with an SPF of 15+.

Wear broad brimmed hats that shade head, neck, face and ears.

Wear close fitting sunglasses with side shields, labelled to meet Australian Standard AS 1067.

Use a wetted scarf.

Provide shaded rest areas.  
Provide an ample supply of cooled, non-alcoholic drinks and ensure they are easily accessible.  
Drink small amounts of water at frequent intervals to avoid dehydration.  
Re-schedule heavier work for cooler times of the day or for cooler days.  
Where possible, rotate work so workers spend less time each on heavy tasks.

## **Heat stroke**

If heat stroke occurs:

Remove the person from heat and allow to rest in the coolest available place.  
Cool the person down with a fine spray of water and fan them.  
Remove excess clothing.  
If conscious, give them cool, but not cold, water to drink.  
Contact a doctor, nurse or first aid officer immediately.  
Do not give salt or alcohol.

## **Remember**

If working in hot weather:



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Replenish lost fluid - take small drinks frequently.  
Reduce sun exposure during the hottest hours of the day.  
Rest frequently in a cool place.

## **Skin Cancer - Topic 12**

**Exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancers in Australia. Skin damage from the sun is cumulative - the longer the skin is exposed to the sun, the greater the risk of skin cancers, regardless of your tan or skin pigment.**

Rural workers have a high risk of getting skin cancers, as their work can expose them to long periods of ultraviolet radiation.

### **Spot the hazard**

To help you spot skin cancer hazards, consider:

Lack of shade in outdoor work areas.  
Reflective surfaces, e.g. water, cement, shiny metal or white painted sheds and silos, cement surfaces.  
What jobs are done in sunlight, and how long they take.

What are the peak sun hours forecast.  
What body surfaces are exposed to sunlight.  
Whether sun blockout is provided or used.  
Whether protective clothing is available and worn.

## **Assess the risk**

To assess the risk of skin cancer from identified hazards:

Work out approximately how long is spent working outdoors each day.  
Identify what jobs are normally done in peak sun - between 10am and 4pm.  
Check whether shade is available for outdoor jobs.  
Check whether hats, protective clothing and sunscreens are adequate.  
Check whether SPF15+ sunscreen is applied to all exposed skin areas.  
Ensure sunscreen is re-applied during outdoor work.

Learn to identify various types of skin cancer, and check your skin for sunspots and unusual pigmentation.

### **Basal Cell Carcinoma**

Starts as a small lump that flattens out as it grows. One of the two most common growths, it can be easily treated and cured.

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### **Squamous Cell Carcinoma**

The other most common growth; however it is more likely to spread to other parts of the body.

### **Malignant Melanoma**

The most dangerous type of skin cancer. Often starts as a dark mole. This type is responsible for over 1000 deaths in Australia each year.

### **Sunspot (Keratoses)**

A small, scaly patch of skin occurring on the arms, face, nose and ears. They are not strictly a form of cancer, but indicate excessive exposure to solar UV radiation.

Be aware of short term injury risks:

reddened skin, blistering, swelling, and later, peeling of the skin.

photosensitisation - acute skin reaction to UV with certain drugs, ointments, creams, and chemicals, resulting in

increased sunburn and skin damage.

photoconjunctivitis and photokeratitis - sore, red, gritty swollen eyes, with sensitivity to strong lights.

Long term effects include:

Prematurely ageing - wrinkling, wasting skin tissues, excessive pigmentation, spots marked by clusters of tiny blood vessels.  
Cataracts of the eye.

## **Make the changes**

Wear cool, protective clothing, i.e. a shady hat, shirt with collar and long sleeves, and long trousers.

Use a sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF +15) before you go into the sun. Noses, lips, ears, bald heads, necks and backs of hands need extra protection.

Reapply sunscreen regularly, especially if you are sweating.

Make use of shade areas wherever possible in the high risk hours.

Use a tractor with shade protection fitted.

To safeguard against cataracts, sunglasses that conform to with applicable standards are recommended.

## **Early signs**

Check your skin for early signs of skin cancer:

any unusual skin conditions that don't heal in four weeks;

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any sore, ulcer or scaly patch on the skin;  
a white patch on the lips that doesn't heal;  
any mole that seems to grow quickly;  
any mole that changes shape or color;  
any mole that bleeds or repeatedly itches.

If you find any of these signs, see your doctor.

### **Remember**

Over-exposure to the sun's rays increases the skin cancer risk both now and in the future.

## **Handling Cattle - Topic 14**

**Injuries from cattle relate to a number of factors - inadequate yard design, lack of training of handlers, unsafe work practices, and the weight, sex, stress factor and temperament of animals.**

### ***Spot the hazard***

Check accident records to identify tasks most



Consider situations that cause stress and injury to handlers and stock.

Take into account sex, weight and temperament of stock.

Consider effects of weather and herding on animal behavior, and time allowed for settling down.

Check potential hazards and safety advantages of stock facilities, including mechanical aids and work layout.

Consider what training is required before a person can confidently and competently handle stock.



## Assess the risk

Using accident records, check which tasks and work situations are most frequently with injuries.

Discuss safety concerns of handlers in regard to various tasks.

Check each identified hazard for likelihood and severity of injury.

Assess proposed safeguards and safe procedures for other hazards.

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## Make the changes

Here are some suggestions for improving safety in cattle handling.

Always plan ahead. Prepare and communicate safe work practices. Get assistance if necessary.

Wear appropriate clothing, including protective footwear and a hat for sun protection. Make use of facilities and aids - headrails, branding cradles, whips, drafting canes, dogs etc.

Know the limitations of yourself and others - work within those limitations.

Respect cattle - they have the strength and speed to cause injury.

## Facilities and conditions

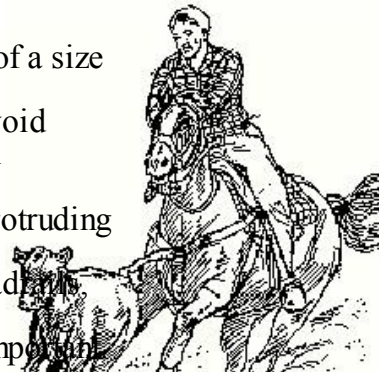
Yards and sheds should be strong enough and of a size to match the cattle being handled.

Good yard design assists the flow of stock. Avoid sharp, blind corners, and ensure gates are well positioned.

Keep facilities in good repair and free from protruding rails, bolts, wire etc.

Where cattle need restraining, use crushes, head cradles, etc.

Footholds and well-placed access ways are important



Try to maintain yards in non-slippery condition.  
Cattle are more unpredictable during cold, windy weather.



## **The stock**

Hazards vary according to the age, sex, breed, weight, horn status, temperament and training of animals.

Approach cattle quietly, and make sure they are aware of your presence.

Bulls are more aggressive during mating season and extremely dangerous when fighting. Separate into different yards where appropriate.

Cows and heifers are most likely to charge when they have a young calf at foot.

Heifers can also be dangerous at weaning time.

Isolated cattle often become stressed and are more likely to charge when approached.

Cattle with sharp horns are dangerous - dehorning is recommended where practicable. Dehorned and polled cattle can still cause injury.

## **Cattle yarding**

Avoid working in overstocked yards where you risk being crushed or trampled.

While drafting cattle through a gate, work from one side to avoid being knocked down by animal trying to go through.



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Take care when working with cattle in a crush, e.g. to vaccinate, apply tail tags, etc. A sudden movement by stock could crush your arms against rails or posts.  
When closing a gate behind cattle in a crush or small yard, stand to one side, or with one foot on the gate in case the mob forces the gate back suddenly.

### **Kicking and butting**

To avoid kick injuries, attempt to work either outside the animal's kicking range or directly against the animal, where the effect of being kicked will be minimized.  
In dairies there is a high risk of being kicked. Try to follow a regular routine so as not to alarm cows - e.g. by placing cold water on their teats.  
When working on an animal's head, use head bail to restrain it from sudden movement forwards or back.  
Take care when using hazardous equipment, such as brands or knives for castrating or bang-tailing.

### **Stud cattle**

When working with stud cattle, train animals to accept intensive handling through gradual familiarization, e.g. grooming, washing, clipping.  
When leading cattle on a halter, never wrap the lead rope round your arm or hand. If the animal gets out of control, you could be dragged.  
Bulls should be fitted with a nose ring. When being led, their heads should be held up by the nose lead.

## Hygiene

Be aware of the risks of contracting such diseases as Leptospirosis or Q Fever when working with animals. These diseases are transmitted through contact with blood, saliva and urine.

Hygiene is important. Consider vaccinating herds against such diseases.

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## Handling Sheep - Topic 15

**Manual handling injuries - wear and tear to the back, shoulders, neck, torso, arms and legs are the main problems to avoid when handling sheep. Awkward postures, working off balance, and strenuous, repetitive and sudden stress movements can cause immediate or gradual strain injuries and conditions.**

### Spot the hazard

Take note of sheep handling activities that put strain on any part of the body. Unfit, untrained or out of condition workers are most likely to be injured. Check sheep yarding, handling and shearing facilities for injury hazards. Check injury records for tasks and situations causing most injuries. Discuss hazard concerns with other sheep handlers.



### Assess the risk

Assess each identified hazard for the likelihood of injury or harm. Assess also the likely

of injury or harm. The more likely and serious the potential injury, the more urgent it is to minimize the risks.

## **Make the changes**

The following suggestions are to help farmers and sheep handlers make sheep handling safer:

- Use a yard design that will encourage sheep to work freely.

- Build yards on sloping ground for better drainage.

- Keep shadows to a minimum where not required to provide shade. Build protective coverings over working and drafting races where practical.

- Avoid slippery surfaces, especially in races and forcing yards.

- Keep dust levels at a minimum.

## **Fitness and health**

People working with sheep should:

- Exercise regularly, and eat a well balanced diet to keep fit and maintain required energy levels.

- Read labels on chemical containers carefully, and follow manufacturers' instructions and safety directions.

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Observe recommended withholding periods for drugs or chemicals before stock are slaughtered.

### **Working with lambs**

When marking and mulesing lambs, use a cradle where feasible. Keeping a firm grip on lambs helps to avoid cuts and chemical spillage.

Catchers should wear protective gloves.

Use a work system on cradles that minimizes hazards of being cut, sprayed with chemicals or jabbed with a needle.

Sterilize knives, shears and ear pliers, and ensure operators observe hygiene practices.

### **Jetting, dipping, drenching**

Choose chemicals that are most efficient and least harmful to humans. Always wear protective clothing, goggles and breathing equipment where specified.

Use positive air supply hoods. If headaches or other discomforts occur after handling chemicals, seek medical advice and have appropriate health tests. Avoid using those chemicals in future.

Ensure correct mixing rates are used.

Keep equipment well maintained, and check regularly to avoid chemical leakage.



### **Mustering**



Plan the muster. Sheep movement is affected by wind direction, location of water, etc.

Allow plenty of time. Do not rush stock.

Use dogs to control the mob. High speed chases on bikes or horses can cause accidents.

### Lifting sheep

If sheep need to be lifted, get assistance where possible.

When lifting alone, sit the sheep on its rump, squat yourself down, take a firm hold of its back legs while keeping the sheep's head up to restrict movement. Pull the animal firmly against your body, and lift using your legs, not your back.

If lifting over a fence, do not attempt to drag the sheep over. Rather, work from the same side as the sheep.

To save lifting, put a drafting gate at the end of the handling race. It is advisable to have several positions for "drop gates" in the race to hold sheep that are to be drafted off.

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## Rams

Rams can be aggressive and unpredictable. Treat them with caution.

When working rams in a race, ensure you are protected from those behind you. This applies particularly when checking testicles, etc. A well-positioned drop gate is useful to reduce the hazard.

## Transmittable diseases

Animals carry diseases that are transferable to humans. Be familiar with the symptoms you can determine if disease exists in the flock.

If signs of disease appear, have the disease confirmed and animals tested.

If the disease is present, treat affected animals appropriately and vaccinate to prevent further occurrence.

Diseases are transmitted by urine, blood and saliva, and through open wounds (e.g. scabby mouth).

Keep open wounds covered. Wash well with water, soap and antiseptic if contact is made with urine, blood or saliva from diseased animals.

Personal hygiene is important at all times.

