

Dress for safety

As spring rolls around and field work picks up, so does the potential for farm accidents. Tractor overturns remain the leading cause of death for farmers, ranchers and workers.

Approximately 19 percent come from machinery and about 36 percent involve tractors. Another 5 percent of farm and ranch accidents are livestock related.

Stress has always been a major factor in farm and ranch accidents. This culprit shows up when farmers and ranchers try to do too much in too short a time.

If possible, farmers and ranchers should try to find additional help during their busy times. They should also take time to relax some during long days.

Head injuries are a common occurrence on the farm and tend to be serious. When doing work that might involve possible head injury, trade your familiar baseball cap or straw hat for a hard hat.

When spraying herbicides and insecticides overhead, wear a wide-brimmed hat that will not allow liquids to seep through. Make sure the brim is wide enough to keep chemical spray from drifting down over the back of the neck or face.

Eyes have been labeled the “windows to the soul,” but just like all windows they can break if something is hurled, splashed or sprayed into them.

Safety goggles and sunglasses should be just as much a part of your daily garb as a good pair of steel-toed shoes. Sunglasses are important because they lessen eye fatigue after long hours in the bright spring and summer sun.

While people often consider the farm a place of quiet tranquility, many farmers experience hearing loss.

As a rule of thumb, farmers should reach for ear protection whenever the noise level reaches 85 decibels. Farmers don't carry testing equipment to measure decibel level, so they should wear protection when in doubt about the noise level.

Earmuffs are better than earplugs because the latter can cause compaction of earwax that is difficult to remove.

If you plan to stay in the sun most of the day, wear long-sleeved cotton clothing. Natural fibers allow the skin to breathe and offer protection from the sun's harmful rays.

Loose-fitting clothes remain a health hazard. Avoid wearing sweats with long drawstrings that hang from the waist or around the neck.

These strings are made of extremely strong nylon or other artificial fibers. Such fibers don't rip or tear as easily as clothing like cotton. It's easy for dangling drawstrings to catch in augers or other moving parts.

Shoes and boots can provide foot protection and traction. Make certain your shoes are clean of mud and manure that can cause slipping and falls.

Proper fit is important for both day-long comfort and stability. When spraying chemicals, wear waterproof footwear that won't absorb chemicals.

Rings hang up on bolts, sharp corners – just about anything you find around the farmstead. Always remove them and other loose-fitting jewelry. Failure to do so can result in injury to fingers or other limbs.

Without a doubt, safely dressed farmers and ranchers seldom make the fashion pages of GQ or even the local paper, but you won't find them on the "obit" pages either.