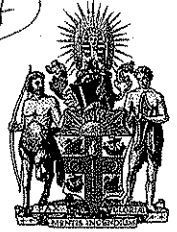


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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales



From the Victorian Trauma Committee

To the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee

Parliamentary Inquiry – Injuries and Fatalities on Victorian Farms

Dear Ms Murray,

Thank you for the opportunity of presenting a submission to your Inquiry into Injuries and Fatalities on Victorian Farms.

Attached is the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Policy on Farm Injury, highlighting our specific points of interest. In addition to those points, we would like to highlight our concern that children under 15 years of age appear to be especially vulnerable to fatal farm injury events¹. Similarly, in 2000, there was a steady increase in emergency department presentations for motorcycle injury among children since 1996/1997².

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons support your Committee's endeavours on this subject and support any preventative measures which benefit the farming community.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Richardson FRACS
Chairman
RACS Victorian Trauma Committee

References

¹ "Hazard" Edition No. 33, December 1997 (Victorian Injury Surveillance System, Monash University Accident Research Centre)

² "Farm Injury Regular Surveillance Tools (FIRST)" – an initiative of the Monash University Accident Research Centre – Annual Report 2000 (Vol. 3, No. 1. June 2001)

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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Policy on Trauma

FARM INJURY

[updated February 2003]

Recognising the nature of serious injury occurring in the farming environment, the College recommends that:

1. Tractor safety
Roll over protective structures [ROPS] and effective occupant restraints be installed on all tractors.
2. Tetanus
The farming community be continually alerted to the importance of maintaining immunity to tetanus.
3. Helmets
Research be continued into the feasibility of developing suitable helmet standards for farming activities.
4. Machinery/tool design
Encouragement and support be offered to the reference group established to examine and improve safety design in farm machinery and equipment, to review impediments to safety design, to gather relevant data and to liaise with manufacturers and suppliers.
5. Motor Vehicle Deaths on Rural Roads
A management system be developed to reduce road traffic injury on rural roads, to define risk factors and implement a rural road safety strategy.
6. Farm Rescue
The Australian Manual of Farm Rescue be made available to rural rescue personnel and the farming community.
7. Emergency Care
Improved access to acute/emergency care management courses be provided for rural health-care professionals.

8. Medical Education-Specific Injuries

Manuals outlining the principles of treatment of specific farm injuries be made available, with training support, to rural medical practitioners.

9. Rehabilitation Services for those Injured on Farms

Manuals on injury rehabilitation, specific to returning workers to farming activities, be made available to rural physiotherapists with training support.

10. Counselling Services

- a) Counselling services be made available for families and others affected by farm injury.
- b) Debriefing and counselling services be made available for rural health and emergency care workers.

11. Developing Safety Skills and Resources in the Farming Community

- a) The farming community continue to be targeted in farm safety programmes.
- b) The emergency card with -
 - I. Emergency telephone numbers
 - II. Instructions to the site of accidents/emergency
 - III. Nature and cause of the injury/emergency and initial assessment, be available to all farming communities.
- c) Improved access to relevant first aid and training be facilitated for farming communities.

12. Farm Injury Data.

- a) Data on farm injury be standardised and collected in a universal way so that useful preventative and management strategies can be developed.
- b) Effective coordinating mechanisms be established.
- c) Rural general practitioners and surgeons be encouraged to participate in farm injury data collection.

13. Trauma Communication Systems

- a) The National Road Trauma Advisory Council of Australia [NRTAC] Report of the Working Party on Trauma Systems, 1993, be implemented.
- b) A suitable identification system of farm location be adopted by emergency services in all states and territories of Australia and New Zealand.
- c) Direct communication systems between ambulances and treating doctors be established.
- d) Communication technology be exploited to improve emergency communication in rural areas, and the digital/CDMA system be extended to cover all areas.

14. Ongoing Collaboration for Improving Farm Safety

The College continues its involvement with Farmsafe Australia (and the equivalent organisation in New Zealand) on Farm Safety Reference Groups, to oversee progress on resolutions and to collaborate on key programmes in the farm safety area