

HESSE RURAL HEALTH SERVICE.  
Leigh Community Health Centre.

"CHILDLESS TRACTORS" Farm Safety In Schools

**Background Information/ Introduction**

Farm Safety at the Leigh Community Health Centre commenced in 1994 following a successful submission to Health and Community Services for funding of a pilot program titled "Childless Tractors". This program is aimed at injury prevention in the Rural Sector, targeting primary school aged children, specific to children identifying problems related to riding on open wheel guards on tractors, in the bucket of front end loaders, a utility without a driver as hay is fed from the back and riding in trailers without restraint.

As indicated in the document (H & CS) "Taking Injury Prevention Forward", and in multiple literature on demographic based injury data, occupational injury rates in the rural sector is high, We know that injury & death is happening on our farms and "Childless Tractors" will respond to this by targeting children in the 9 to 11 year age group, ie. Grades five and six through the use of media based peer review to educate in accident awareness and prevention.

The program will be an extension of the first aid classes undertaken by the Community Health Nurse in the primary school setting. Community nurses in our area are also involved in the primary schools as educators in the areas of asthma education, personal development. The nurses are usually known by the children and have a knowledge base of farm and community activity.

**Goals:**

- Reduction in rural based farm related injury and identification of preventative risk factors.
- To increase the awareness of rural children to potential hazards related to farm activities.

**Objectives:**

- To provide children with a knowledge base to make informed decisions for their own safety, by creating a stimulating environment in the class room either by the nurse or other presenters based on 'experiences', ie: farmers who have been injured.
- Through the use of interactive video, overhead projections, peer review, classroom discussions and the completion of a workbook.

**History of "Childless Tractors" Farm Safety In Schools Program**

The initial program was undertaken by two nurses from the Centre, after research and development of a student workbook, the program was offered to the pilot Schools. The program initially ran over six weeks (now eight weeks.)

Three primary schools in the Leigh (Rokewood) area were consulted and with parental approval the three sessions commenced in 1995. The pilot program was enthusiastically received at Rokewood, Teesdale and Shelford with positive reviews from each campus.

This encouraged the extension of the program into the wider Hesse Rural Health Service Area with the program being offered and accepted at the remaining seven schools. In 2002 after a request from Alvie Primary School, the program expanded into this area.

In 2003 with the expansion of the Hesse Rural Health Service into the Bannockburn area, the program was offered to the three primary schools in the expanded area, the offer was accepted by two schools bringing to a total of twelve schools over a two year period.

*D. B. Long*  
*27/04/04*

The program is now offered, and accepted, on a second yearly basis at each of the schools. The program has been successfully presented in Rokewood, Shelford, Teesdale, Cressy, Beeac, Inverleigh, Winchelsea, Mount Moriac, Moriac, Deans Marsh, Alvie, Lethbridge and Meredith Primary Schools. This program is reliant on the support of the classroom teachers, and the positive feedback from parents continues to encourage the service to promote farm safety in this area.

Massey Ferguson through the local Colac dealership Rhys Evans, were approached and provided a model tractor as a prize for the best completed workbook, initially for the three pilot schools, and extended to the ten schools. This was competitively vied for at each of the schools. We have since also had sponsorship in the form of model tractors from John Deere Australia. Sponsorship for the current round is being pursued

A Demonstration Model Farm was purchased by the Service to be used to demonstrate safe and unsafe situations on the farm and as an evaluation tool, as the availability of the facilitator and equipment from Workcover was not always available, due to the increasing popularity of this excellent resource in state wide promotions and programs.

To further enhance the learning experience of the children a modified 'Risk Assessment Farm Walk' was piloted at the Warrambeen Landcare Centre in 1999, with 3 local schools participating. This was a great success with positive feedback from students, teachers and parents. To incorporate this into the program funding options were investigated, as the option of busing the students to an appropriate working farm is prohibitive to schools in this remote rural area.

In 2000 we were fortunate to obtain the funding from Victorian WorkCover Authority, to make 'Farm Safety Risk Assessment Walks' a valued part of the 'Childless Tractors' Farm Safety Program, with all schools participating in the walks at Warrambeen. This funding continued until 2003 when it was no longer available in the WorkSafe guidelines.

We were able to fund the 'Walks' in 2003 through the VFF Farm Safe Alliance Farm Safety Action Group funding. To keep this invaluable component of the program we are investigating other options of funding availability. In late 2003 we approached WorkSafe K.I.D.S in Ballarat, at the suggestion of WorkSafe Victoria, as a funding possibility. Funding from here is not forthcoming at this stage for this component of the program.

An approach was made by the Community Health Nurses from the Lismore campus of the Corangamite Health Services, for in-service train the trainer sessions so that the "Childless Tractors" program could be delivered wider than the Hesse Rural Health Service area.

This training took the form of two half day sessions of instruction and demonstration, supply of resource contacts and the supply of a laser copy of the student workbook. The nurses were also able to "sit in" on some sessions to observe the program / teaching techniques being delivered at a local primary school.

Timboon Community Health Centre was also provided with 'Train the Trainer' sessions in early 1999, and are now presenting the 'Childless Tractor' program to an even wider rural area. If we can continue to spread the message to our future farmers we may provide a safer work environment for the next generation of farmers.

This Centre has been approached to provide further "Childless Tractor" program train the trainer sessions to more Community Health Services outside the Hesse Rural Health Service area, and this will be attended, as time and finances becomes available.

**Where to from here?**

As a follow up to discussions with Matt Stevens from WorkSafe K.I.D.S Ballarat, we have discussed options to try to bring together the stakeholders who are providing innovative educational programs that may assist in the reduction of farm injuries or at least continue to raise awareness of the dangers inherent with the rural lifestyle, with a view to making a safer environment for all.

This is not about ownership and endless submission writing, it is about an alliance of ideas and innovation, we need to be able to put all this knowledge on the table with the ideal being that we develop a Statewide program. To be successful we need to utilize all resources that are available, be they at a local, regional or any other level.

Whilst Farm Safety for children has been a focus of the Hesse Rural Health Centre since 1994, programs for the wider community have also been delivered.

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Course Content.

The course follows situations, identifies risks and hazards on the farm and gives safe alternatives through classroom interaction, discussion and the completion of the workbook provided to each child.

Each session is approx. 1 hour in duration, allowing time for discussion, which is encouraged. Children will be expected to do a short session of homework on their workbooks each week; this encourages discussion with parents and siblings.

Week One Farm Rules and why we have them

Overview of the Program.

Farm rules and why we have them.

Discussion on safe and unsafe areas on the farm.

Distribution and explanation of the workbooks.

Week Two First Aid and Emergency Services.

Safety on the farm a place of work and business as well as home

Discuss the importance of learning first aid.

Identify different means of obtaining assistance in an emergency.

Week Three Tractors

Identify and name safety features on tractors,

Discuss the importance of maintenance and servicing of tractors.

Identify safe practice when near tractors.

Week Four. Area Specific Safety.

Discuss safe practice when around other farm machinery, guards on machinery and other moving parts

Program is adjusted to area specific i.e. cropping, grazing, and dairying, and will include discussion on safety in and around shearing sheds or dairies, grain storage, effluent pits, large farm implements if relevant.

Week Five. Motor Bikes

Safe use of four and two wheel motorbikes.

Protective gear required for this activity.

The importance of bike sizes relevant to rider size.

Safe and legal areas to ride.

Week Six. Chemical and Workshop Safety

Give an understanding of why chemicals need special handling and storage.

Clear labeling and original containers.

Locked storage areas.

Protective gear required.

Safe and tidy workshops.

Week Seven. Animal Safety. Water Safety.

Identify the unpredictability of animals.

Discuss problems with pets.

Zoonosis. What disease can your animals pass to you?

Cover horses handling if relevant.

Water safety and dangers of dams, rivers, old sheep dips, effluent pits and water storages on farms

Week Eight Model Farm 'Risk Assessment Farm Walk'. Presentation of Certificates.

Children are bused to "Warrambeen" Alcoa Landcare Centre or "Wurrook South" for this session.

The model farm will be used for evaluation of the childrens' understanding of safe and unsafe situations on a farm. A WorkCover Inspector is invited to attend the walk, the children & the farm owners walk and identify hazards on the farm.

Evaluation: Each child completes pre and post program tick sheet evaluation forms.

Classroom teachers are asked to provide a written assessment on content, resources and presentation.

Children will be asked to hand in their completed workbooks for evaluation of understanding the program content, (and judging if prizes are available). The books are returned to the children following evaluation.

The community Health Nurse evaluates the full year program.