

**Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
Mar. 9-15, 2005**

FACT SHEET #5

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

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Falls

Although not usually fatal, falls are a significant cause of injury to farmers aged 60 and over. Falls from machines is the third leading cause injuries and falls from non-machines is the fifth leading cause of injuries to senior farmers in Canada.

A consistent finding in studies is that age and gender are important issues in relation to falling. Women 65 years of age or older fall twice as often as their male counterparts. The gender gap, however, decreases in progressively older age groups.

“Farmers live and work in what is basically an industrial workplace,” said Bob Freisen, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. “This makes it imperative for safety to be top of mind for everyone who lives and works on a farm.”

Health Canada studies indicate that falls and fall-related injuries are often the result of a combination of factors reflecting physical and behavioural conditions as well as environmental conditions or hazards.

It is well documented that medication use increases with advancing age due to the greater prevalence and severity of health problems among seniors. In addition to taking more medications, older people also develop a heightened sensitivity to drug effects. Drug interactions and side effects are often associated with increased risk of falling and injury among older persons.

The health benefits of staying active and exercising are well known. However, an additional challenge to promoting exercise among seniors are self-imposed activity limitations commonly found among those who have already experienced a fall, due to a fear of falling again.

Environmental factors account for one third to one half of all falls among seniors. If you have seniors working or living within an agricultural workplace, make sure the walkways are clear and the footing is solid.

Falls can have a grave impact on seniors and their independence, and are responsible for about 84 per cent of injury-related hospital admissions and 40 per cent of admissions to nursing homes. Injured seniors often face an irreversible decline in function, which can lead to institutionalization and sometimes even death.

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The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, Farm Credit Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, urge farmers to maintain clear walking areas with non-slip footing and take the necessary time to do things safely.

- 30 -

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