

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

FACT SHEET #6

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

1101-75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7

Tel: (613) 236-3633 Fax: (613) 236-5749 info@cfafca.ca

Hearing damage on the farm

That dull, ringing sensation in your ears after a long day on the tractor is an indication that you have exceeded a sound level that can be comfortably tolerated, and could be the first sign of hearing loss. This ringing is typically accompanied by a slight loss of hearing. While overnight rest will generally restore normal hearing, repeated, prolonged exposure to noise of this intensity will likely result in a permanent hearing loss.

Sound is measured in decibels (dB), with the range of zero to 85 dB being acceptable levels. Research shows that risk of hearing loss is determined by how loud the noise is, how close you are to it, and how long you are exposed to it. High-impact noise at close range can cause permanent hearing loss in seconds. Examples are gunfire (140 dB), an engine backfiring, and cutting, grinding or punching metal.

The greatest risk to farmers is spending prolonged periods being exposed to normal farm noise that often are slightly to moderately higher than acceptable levels. Tractors, grinders, augers, chain saws, lawn mowers, and even squealing pigs have decibel levels that exceed 90. It is this prolonged exposure to farm noises that often causes hearing loss for farmers.

Hearing aids cannot always improve the hearing of those suffering from noise induced hearing loss. Preventing the problem is the best approach. Here are a few things you can do to help reduce the risk of hearing loss on your farm:

- When purchasing equipment, check the manufacturer's literature for sound level listings and consider the noise output level of the machine. The additional cost of purchasing a tractor with a cab may be outweighed by the increased benefits of reduced noise and operator comfort. If you don't have a cab for your tractor, wear CSA approved hearing protectors.
- Simple machinery maintenance can also lower noise levels, such as keeping all equipment well lubricated, properly adjusted and maintained. In addition to reducing noise, maintenance will also increase the life span of equipment, reduce down time, and create safer working conditions.
- Limit the amount of time spent in a noisy area. If you can't reduce exposure, wear hearing protection.

over...

Hearing damage on the farm ../2.

- When working in a shop, keep as much distance as possible between you and noisy equipment. Locate a noisy air compressor or other shop equipment as far away from the work area as possible. Doubling the distance from the source of a noise reduces the sound level by one-fourth. An acoustic barrier, made out of fire resistant material, could also reduce the noise level in a shop.

“Hearing loss is entirely preventable on the farm,” said Marcel Hacault, Executive Director of the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA). “Protecting the health and well-being of everyone on the farm is not just good sense, it’s good business.”

CASA along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Farm Credit Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada want to remind producers to protect against hearing loss on their farms.

- 30 -

For more information call:

Theresa Whalen–Ruiter, CFA Farm Safety Coordinator

Tel/Fax: (613) 731-7321 E-mail: twr@magma.ca

To download this article visit web sites www.cfa-fca.ca or www.casa-acsa.ca