

**Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
Mar. 11-17,
2009**

FACT SHEET #1

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

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Now hear this...

The traditional picture of a farm as a serene and quiet workplace couldn't be farther from the truth. Machinery, motors, and even sounds made by animals, sometimes creates a noisy and often hazardous environment.

“Since the industrial revolution, noise is one of the most common occupational health hazards,” explains Marcel Hacault, Executive Director of the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA). “Noise-induced hearing loss is 100 percent preventable but once acquired, hearing loss is permanent and irreversible. Therefore, prevention measures must be taken by employers and workers to ensure hearing protection at all times.”

“PPE only works if you use it!” is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on the use, fit and access of personal protective equipment (PPE) in agriculture. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 11 to 17, 2009. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and CASA deliver CASW in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

What is the difference between sound and noise? Sound is what we hear and noise is unwanted sound, so the difference depends on the listener and the circumstances. For example, certain music may be a pleasing sound to one listener but an annoying noise to another. Either way, it can be a hearing hazard if the sound is loud and the exposure long.

Sound is measured in decibels (dB). A normal conversation takes place at about 60 dB, whereas a gun shot is above 130 dB and will cause pain. Most power tools operate at between 90 and 120 decibels, chickens inside a building are about 105 dB and a pig’s squeal can reach up to 130 dB. Hearing protection should be worn if noise or sound levels exceed 85 dB.

The degree of hearing hazard is related to both the level of the noise as well as to the duration of the exposure. Here are two easy ways to determine if a noise is loud enough to damage your hearing. First, if you have to raise your voice to talk to someone who is an arm’s length away, then the noise is likely hazardous. Second, if your ears are ringing or sounds seem dull or flat after leaving a noisy place, then you probably were exposed to hazardous noise levels.

The best way to prevent occupational hearing loss is to reduce noise at the source by engineering methods such as installing a muffler or building an acoustic barrier. If hearing protection is required because noise can’t be reduced at its source, then a complete hearing conservation

program should be implemented. A hearing conservation program includes noise assessment, hearing protector selection, employee training and education, audiometric testing, maintenance, inspection, record keeping, and program evolution.

The most suitable kind hearing protection depends on a number of factors including level of noise, comfort, personal preference, and the suitability of the hearing protector for both the worker and his environment. It is best to keep a variety of noise reducing earplugs and earmuffs available to suit all situations and preferences.

The CFA along with CASA, FCC and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that “*PPE only works if you use it!*”

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*** Free photos and cartoons are available to accompany this article at www.casa-acsa.ca .

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

Side Bars:

Select hearing protection that is:

- Correct for the job. Refer to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z94.2-02 “*Hearing Protection Devices – Performance, Selection, Care and Use*” or contact the agency responsible for occupational health and safety legislation in your jurisdiction for more information.
- Provides adequate protection. Check the manufacturer’s literature.
- Comfortable enough to be accepted and worn.

How To Wear Soft Foam Earplugs:

- 1. Roll** the earplug up into a small, thin “snake” with your fingers. You can use one or both hands
- 2. Pull** the top of your ear up and back with your opposite hand to straighten out your ear canal. The rolled-up earplug should slide right in.
- 3. Hold** the earplug in with your finger. Count to 20 or 30 out loud while waiting for the plug to expand and fill the ear canal. Your voice will sound muffled when the plug has made a good seal.
- 4. Check the fit** when you are all done. Most of the foam body of the earplug should be within the ear canal. Try cupping your hands tightly over your ears. If sounds are much more muffled with your hands in place, the earplug may not be sealing properly. Take the earplug out and try again.