



FARM WATER SAFETY

Q. Where do toddlers commonly drown on farms?

A. The most common locations for toddler drowning deaths on farms are dams, however the number of drowning deaths in all rural waterways is increasing.

Q. How do I keep my child safe?

A. In rural areas, it is not always feasible to fence off large water bodies such as lakes or dams, so Royal Life Saving suggests parents create a safe play area for children. This would be a securely fenced area near the home in which the child can be closely supervised by adults.

Q. What is a child safe play area?

A. A child safe play area is a carefully planned, designated location which is securely fenced and helps to prevent a young child from entering the farm without adult supervision. Pool fencing requirements, including appropriate 'child resistant' gates and latches, can be used as a guide in planning a safe play area.

Q. Why do parents leave their children unsupervised?

A. There are many reasons why a parent's attention can be diverted from their child. Busy lifestyles, phone calls, visitors, preparing meals, other siblings are just some of the things which demand attention. The Keep Watch program advocates that supervision be supported by fenced safe play areas and water familiarisation, and that family members undertake resuscitation training.

Q. What else can I do to prevent drowning?

A. Ensure others on the farm (eg. farm workers, visitors) are alert to "watch out" for children who may wander near water - especially at peak times when parents may get distracted (eg. harvesting, stock movement, BBQs with visitors).

Q. Where can I go for further information on how to build a safe play area?

A. Farmsafe Australia (www.farmsafe.org.au) and the USA National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (www.marshfieldclinic.org/research/children/) have information on safe play area design and construction.

REAL LIFE STORY

Farm parents were attending a field day at another farm with their four year old child. The child's mother went inside a shed to inspect it, leaving the child to play outside. The mother emerged a few minutes later and was unable to see her son. After about 30 minutes of searching, the boy was found in one of the three dams at the back of the property. The dams were over 30 metres from the shed area and were surrounded by a three strand wire fence, with the lowest strand about 40 cm from the ground. There was also a single strand electric fence about 65 cm above the ground.

Drowning deaths now occur more frequently in rural waterways than any other location. Toddlers have drowned in rivers, lakes, dams, as well as water troughs and irrigation channels.

Rural Waterways CHECKLIST:

- Fill in unused ditches, sheep dips and post holes
- Cover/ lids on wells and tanks
- Ensure someone is designated to 'keep watch' over children
- Ensure others on the farm (eg. farm workers, visitors) are alert to "watch out" for children who may wander near water - especially at peak times when parents may get distracted (eg. harvesting, stock movement, BBQs with visitors)
- Create a securely fenced safe play area close to the house to keep the child from entering the farm workplace, including water bodies

Royal Life Saving has developed a number of fact sheets on water safety issues in Australia. Contact Royal Life Saving on:

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