

Ag accident dangers outlined

FORT COLLINS, Col. — Farmers work to beat the clock, to beat the weather, to beat the bank. Yet, there's at least one competitor they aren't beating - accidental job-related deaths.

Those deaths, coupled with deaths suspected to be linked to pesticides and other toxic chemicals, are decreasing the number of employees in a profession already strapped for workers, said health-safety expert Roy Buchan.

Buchan is with Colorado State University's Institute of Rural Environmental Health.

"The decline of people in ag production and the constant high rate of accidental deaths on our farms and ranches are going to have a direct affect on one another," said Buchan.

Buchan and co-worker Del Sandfort, both CSU industrial hygienists, recently spent five years designing a program to help reduce agricultural deaths. Program funding has ended, but the two experts still give safety workshops.

Daily, Buchan pointed out, five American agricultural workers die in accidental deaths, placing the profession just behind mining on the list of hazardous occupations.

In 1982, the last year that statistics are available, 1,800 agricultural workers died. That is about 52 deaths per 100,000 out of the 3.4 million workers in agricultural production.

In comparison, 600 miners out of a workforce of 1.1 million died that

year, a rate of 55 deaths per 100,000 workers.

Agricultural deaths have helped decrease the number of Americans involved in agriculture production from 5 percent to 3 percent in the last two years, Buchan said.

Exposure to pesticides, grain dust and toxic gases contribute to the decreasing number of agricultural workers, Buchan and Sandfort suspect.

They and other experts believe many lung, kidney and liver diseases and many cancers might be related to chemical hazards on the farm and ranch. However, no statistics are available to confirm their suspicions.

"These people are constantly exposed to toxic chemicals and the hazardous by-products of their labor," Buchan said.

"The authorities pull some product off the grocers' shelves because people might get 30 parts per billion of ethylene dibromide. But nobody asks what EDB levels farmers are exposed to when they are applying that chemical."

The cause of many agricultural deaths often is related, in an off-beat way, to economics — the hairline margin of farmers' and ranchers' operations.

"They are so busy they don't have time to take the precautions that they should," Sandfort said. "The truth is they can't afford not to take the time."

On top of that, many workers consider accidental deaths merely an occupational hazard. "They really believe it," Sandfort said.

"They know the potential danger, but they don't think it can ever happen to them."

Many accidental deaths could be avoided if workers would turn off machinery to make repairs or adjustments, Buchan and Sandfort said.

They cited these as the culprits responsible for most accidental deaths:

—tractor toll-overs, the most common cause of agricultural related accidental deaths;

—a revolving tractor shaft that powers equipment being pulled;

—machinery that feeds plants into chopper blades. Often the machines get clogged, and while unclogging it, a farmer's shirt gets caught, pulling an arm into the blades.

"If a farmer or rancher dies prematurely, a fourth or sometimes a third of the workforce on the operation is gone. It's just a good investment to do away with occupational hazards," said Buchan.

Dairy

Pipeline

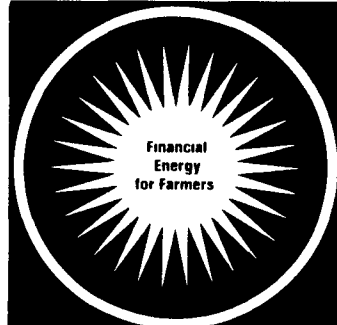
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can become very "loose" and lose a lot of flesh. Feeding excess protein also puts added stress on cows, and taxes their excretory system. Protein is too costly to overfeed, even if it is in the form of home grown feeds. Even though it may soon be in abundant supply, due to Spring harvests, it should be rationed out over most of the year so as to avoid expensive protein purchases at a later date.

On many dairy farms, the changes made in the feeding program in the Spring of the year are drastic ones, and this is especially true this year because of the tight feed situation. These changes should be made gradually, with the help of trained individuals, in an effort to keep the ration balanced and to prevent "throwing off" the herd.



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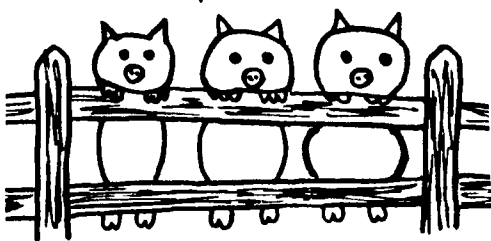
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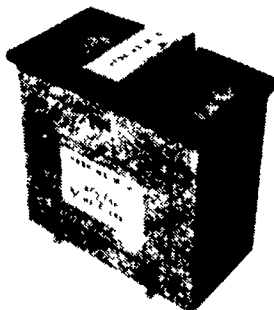
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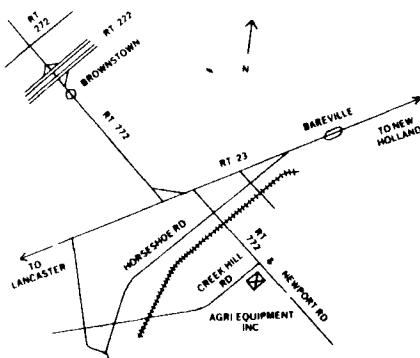
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