



Brockett's Ag Advice

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Think, practice, preach and act safety

Parts of Pennsylvania are in the midst of corn harvest while other parts are just getting well underway. At any rate, many farmers are busy harvesting a bumper crop of corn this year. A large part of this corn will be harvested as ear corn, which leads me into the theme for this column—SAFETY.

I have no idea which farm machine has eaten the most human parts, but I would guess that the corn picker has to be near the top. It is such an innocent looking piece of metal. There are no knives flashing, no explosions or explosives, and no open cutters or beaters.

The operator usually has good results for a good number of rounds and is thinking of the fact that only a few more rounds will put me ahead of last year when—Wham! Bam! Jam up time hits. The first time we shut down the PTO, jump off the tractor, and pull the mess out of the rollers. We think "oh well, we lost a little time but we were ahead anyway."

Two rounds later the same thing happens—we're in a bit of a hurry so do not completely clear the rollers before starting up.

Twenty feet up the row and Whammo—a real jam up occurs. Again it is shut down—jump off—clear out. But this time the stalks have wrapped around the rollers, the cows are coming to the gate for milking, and we really need to get

another round in before quitting for the night.

The easy way to get that darn stalk off is to let the tractor help, so start up the PTO. "Yes I know it is dangerous" you think, "so I will run the tractor slow". You begin to congratulate yourself because the stalk is beginning to unwind and feed into the roller. One more tug should do it.

"There it's loose, but wait, it's moving too fast—my hand is caught in the stalk—come on this can't be happening—I've done this before—come on body, pull that hand back—oh good, someone came and shut off the tractor—I don't think the roller even got me—I'll be more careful next time—oh man, why does my hand hurt now, it's out and safe—see, there is no blood—wait a minute, I must be having sight problems, *where is my hand?*"

Time lost clearing rollers or beaters manually is NEVER as much as that lost due to injuries. Stop and think of others if you don't care whether you lose a part of your body or not.

Who may copy your carelessness someday? A son or daughter? A young hired person? A neighbor boy who looks up to you? Stop and think of the labor and economic burden you put on someone else if you get hurt.

Stop and think of the time lost if you do get hurt—time to take you to the hospital (even if you are killed,

they will still take you to the hospital)—time to mend—time to retrieve your hand from the picker (who wants to run across that grisely thing when grinding corn, besides it would probably cause spoilage anyway because it is too high in moisture). Just STOP AND THINK!

Any one under 16 should never be allowed to operate a corn picker, even if it is your own child who has been operating equipment since he or she was a year old. Those over 16 must have a lot of experience in machine operation.

No one operating a picker should be pressured to get one more load before chore time or be in a race to get a load picked before the empty wagon returns. Someone should know that the picker is being run and if it is stopped somewhere for awhile, investigate. Turning off the tractor may stop the loss at a hand instead of an arm or a whole person.

No parent in their right mind should ever give a child the treat of a ride on a tractor operating picker. Nor should any child be allowed around a picker in operation.

Of course, children can be and are useful on a farm, but they are also very vulnerable to farm accidents for several reasons— they usually do not think anything can hurt them— they are small so can be snatched up in chains or other moving parts easier than an adult. They are usually so eager to win

a parent's praise that they will do things that adults would hesitate to do. Even elevators can be dangerous. It may be great fun to go up the elevator by riding the cross pieces, but what happens if a small foot gets under one?

Parents who are farmers must practice safety and preach safety more than other parents. Farming does not have to be the dangerous business that it is— it is up to each of you to stop this needless loss of valuable time, body parts, and lives. Think, practice, preach, and act SAFETY.



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