

Board Game Addresses Child Safety On Amish Farms

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Farming is one of America's most dangerous occupations. The danger is especially threatening on Mennonite and Old Order Amish farms where youngsters use tractors, big horses and heavy farm machinery at early ages.

Teaching farm safety to Mennonite and Old Order Amish children is the goal of an interactive board game, "Amos and Sadie's Farm: A Pathway to Safety," co-created by researchers from the School of Nursing in Penn State's College of Health and Human Development.

"Amos & Sadie's Farm: A Pathway to Safety" is the only board game that specifically addresses the cultural safety needs and concerns of the Amish community while teaching children to stay safe on their farms and in their fields. The game, which took two years to produce, is being introduced into the Amish schools dotting the Lancaster countryside. More than 300 copies of the game have been created for distribution.

"There is a high incidence of accidents and injuries among Amish children. This game is one of the few resources in the country specific to the Amish and Mennonite communities, and it may help reduce farm-related injuries among children," says Dr. Kathleen Fisher, project director and assistant professor in Penn State's School of Nursing.

The team gathered information from local community members, including Amish children, to help create the game. A review of two Amish newspapers — "the Diary" and "Die Botschaft" — identified stories of accidents, injuries, and specific farm-related

injuries. One news clipping, for example, notes that a 13-year-old boy fell while cleaning the stable and the horse stepped on his abdomen area, injuring his liver to the extent that the doctor told him no work for three to six months.

The researchers also conducted a review of self-reported accidents and injuries of Lancaster County Amish between August 1995 and December 1999. They found 23 injuries and two fatalities associated with livestock, such as being kicked, trampled or bitten; 19 injuries and three fatalities reported due to building structures and falls; five injuries and eight fatalities were reported due to machinery.

This informal sampling underrepresents the true magnitude of accidents and injuries as many Old Order Amish and Mennonites may not seek medical attention unless they feel the accident is significant. In addition, Old Order Amish does not carry health insurance, says Fisher, who is located at The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Across all farms nationally — not just Old Order Amish and Mennonite — an estimated 100,000 children are injured each year and more than 100 are killed in incidents involving tractors and other farm equipment, livestock, building structures and falls.

"Interviews were conducted with Old Order community members and statistics of farm accidents reported to area hospitals were reviewed to determine what safety issues would be covered in the game," explains Fisher.

In the game, children follow a path around a typical Amish farm with a farmhouse, pond,

silos, cows, windmill, horse and buggy, and a milk truck. The game is for two to six players, school age to adult. Each player chooses a colored game piece to be moved around a farm pathway. On a typical turn, a player draws a question card. If the player answers the question correctly, he or she rolls the die and moves forward the number rolled. Many of the questions were developed by Amish and Mennonite school children so the topics relate directly to Old Order farm practices.

Some sample questions include:

Q: "What are the two potentially dangerous things in the hayloft?"

A: "Pitch fork, hay hole."

Q: "Why do you climb into the access window of the grain silo?"

A: "The gas from the silage can be harmful and there are low levels of oxygen so you could not breathe. You can be smothered by the grain."

Q: "After placing silage in a silo, how long must you wait before entering?"

A: "Three weeks."



Teaching farm safety to Mennonite and Old Order Amish children is the goal of the interactive board game, Amos and Sadie's Farm: A Pathway to Safety.

Other topics include proper cow milking procedures, CPR, carbon monoxide, feeding animals and downed power lines. There are also photo cards. Play-

ers examine the photo and identify the hazard or

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