

# Child Safety – Riding Horses on Farms

Falls from horses have featured significantly in farming incident involving working children over the last two decades.

Working children have sustained serious head injuries, broken bones and lacerations as a result of falls.

Many accidents have happened when handling horses during saddling and unsaddling.

Farmers need to ensure that they invest time and effort when sourcing a suitable horse for their children. Appropriate temperament, behavior, health condition, age, and life experiences of the animal will directly contribute to the riding experience your children will encounter.

This further extends into investing time and effort into ensuring children are competent riders before allowing them to engage in work activities such as droving livestock.

Sending children to riding lessons at a riding school is strongly encouraged. Enrol farm kids enrol in local Pony Clubs and Gymkhanas – where they are trained to safely ride ponies/ horses in a controlled environment but are exposed to different challenges to expand their skills, abilities and confidence.

Farming parents should improve their working children's riding capability and skills prior to allowing them to undertake duties on horseback such as droving sheep and cattle on the farm, also taking into account the terrain and conditions on the farm.

An effective control is ensuring that horses are properly matched to riders. It's important to train the rider, but it is equally important to have a well-trained horse that is used to young riders and well known to parents/handlers. Some horses are suitable to herding livestock – they may be a brilliant kids pony but if they aren't trained around cattle/sheep, they could become a very different horse under those situations – especially with inexperienced or young riders.

## Substitute the risk

Choose the safest mode of transport. It may be safer to drive a suitable vehicle (e.g. an SSV).

Ensure that working children only ride horses that are suited to their size and capabilities.

Inexperienced riders should not be partnered with aggressive or nervous horses.

## Administrative controls

Provide horse riding training for working children with external training providers (e.g. riding schools, pony clubs, gymkhanas) to ensure they have adequate skills to ride horses safely.

Ensure that someone else is with them when saddling and unsaddling horses, to raise the alarm if something goes wrong.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Ensure that everyone involved in work that involves the use of horses wears an appropriate riding helmet. Also ensure that appropriate boots and chest guards are worn.

## GET HELP

VFF Email: [mofs@vff.org.au](mailto:mofs@vff.org.au)

VFF Phone: 1300 822 833