

To Mr Rob Jager
Independent Taskforce on Workplace H & S

Your article in NZ Farmers Weekly must have been designed to provoke a reaction among farmers. Otherwise you are ignorant and arrogant.

Farmers may be skeptical about some of the totally impractical ‘stuff’ that comes out of the Dept of Labour at times but they do NOT think accidents cannot happen to them and, in fact, go to great lengths every day to prevent accidents.

My husband was one of those fatalities. Everything was in good working order, including my husband but a single moment of inattention and it was all over. So many people have said “that could have been us”. Every one of them would have reassessed their own practices. You cannot legislate or prevent that human factor. Even you, Mr Jager, are not infallible.

Not only now, but always, every day, safety is considered priority. To name but a few of the ways safety is considered:

1. Tens of thousands of dollars are spent every year on tracks to keep them safe in our high rainfall area.
2. What is the weather like, what are the tracks like today? Which staff are capable of using equipment for tasks needing doing?
3. Always have 2 people on certain jobs for safety.
4. Invested in R T radios for communication and safety.
5. Someone else knows your plan and where you are on the farm and expected time of return.
6. All quad bikes, tractors, etc are well serviced for the sake of safety.
7. Yards are kept in good repair for convenience and safety.
8. Tiredness, days off, are noted in the busiest times, especially to maximize safety. Extra time off may be given if necessary. We fly longer distances (business and private) rather than drive. The trip is safer and we are better equipped to work safely on return.

Every day, safety is considered in all sorts of ways and yes, we are open to good practical ideas.

We believe one of the main things contributing to the high accident rate on farms is the unpredictability in dealing with livestock, weather conditions and most all, human frailties. Even the most experienced, competent and safety conscious person can get caught out by a fleeting moment of inattention or misjudgement. The consequences are just so much greater in the work we do than for you sitting at your office desk.

You are so wrong. Farmers, and their staff as much as we can manage, are safety conscious. We are all only too well aware of ramifications of injury/death. There may be a few machos out there but the big majority of farmers have great respect for the safety ‘ethic’.