

## SAFETY FIRST Skid-Steer Loader Safety...



Skid-steer loaders are common on the farm. They are a useful piece of equipment because of their maneuverability, especially when compared to tractor-loader combinations. However, skid-steer loaders differ from tractors in steering, mounting and dismounting, and operators are not always aware of the hazards involved in operating them. One important rule in being a safe skid-steer loader operator is to always read the operator's manual before getting into the machine.

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By following some of these other simple rules, you can make operating a skid-steer loader a safe experience and avoid injuries and equipment damage.

- A Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) should never be removed or modified in any manner.
- Side screens and overhead shields should never be removed.
- Seat belts and restraint bars should always be used and never modified or bypassed.
- Never mount or dismount a skid-steer loader with the lift arms up, unless they are held up by the restraining device (NOT the hydraulic system.)
- Don't carry loads high and avoid side slopes.
- Stay away from banks or drop-offs and use guardrails at push-off points.
- Always keep the heavy end uphill.
- Never allow children or untrained adults to operate a skid-steer loader. ■

Information by: UW Center for Agriculture Safety and Health



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by Jeff Kratochwill, ESW  
FARM Rehabilitation  
Specialist*

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# AgrAbility of Wisconsin Plowing Ahead

## AgrAbility Helps with Turben's Second Chance

"Farming is in my blood," according to Dan Turben of Soldiers Grove. Turben grew up on a multi-generation dairy farm, and after buying the farm from his uncle, he milked cows. Then, in 2003, an automobile accident changed everything. Turben lost his right leg below the knee and also broke his left leg and lost some muscle in his lower calf. With these injuries his mobility was limited and bending was difficult. This made milking cows a real challenge. He realized that to continue farming, he needed to reevaluate his farm operation to accommodate his limitations. He decided to switch his operation from dairy to beef cattle, raising about 50 head of beef cattle and a herd of beef cows and calves. However, many obstacles needed to



*A corral system was installed that includes a head gate and head table to restrain the cattle for dehorning and vaccinations.*

be overcome and Turben knew that he needed additional help to make his farm business a success. "It isn't feasible to keep going without assistance," explained Turben regarding farming with his disability.

During his recovery from the auto accident a nurse told Turben about AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) and found the contact information on the Internet for him at [\[wisc.edu/agrability/\]\(http://wisc.edu/agrability/\). He did not hesitate to call the program immediately for services. After contacting AAW, Turben was told about the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(DVR\) and encouraged to sign up for that program as well. He admits that it took a while for the process to start moving forward, but, according to Turben, "once it started rolling, it went good."](http://www.bse.</a></p>
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The process started rolling with a visit from Bruce Whitmore, Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, with the Easter Seals FARM Program (ESW FARM), to Turben's farm for an assessment of the operation. The assessment process included discussing Turben's

needs and issues regarding his day-to-day activities. Whitmore made some detailed observations of Turben's daily routine that Turben himself did not recognize. For example, Whitmore saw that Turben was using an old skid-steer loader to move manure, hay bales and other farm materials. Turben

admitted it was difficult for him to push the foot pedals to operate the loader's arms. Whitmore suggested a skid steer with hand-operated controls with an enclosed cab to protect his hands and joints from the cold weather.

Whitmore also recommended modifying Turben's tractors by adding steps, which Turben could install himself. This would ease his ability to climb onto the tractors and reduce the

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possibility of slipping and falling. This modification was a great help, according to Turben, "When you're aching, you don't have to think how to pull yourself up the tractor with the additional tractor steps."

Since Turben's farm is located on top of a hill in a very hilly region of the state, DVR purchased a Kubota utility vehicle, upon Whitmore's suggestion, so that Turben could move around his farm without having the pain of traveling on uneven and steep terrain. "That Kubota makes every trip I make, here [to the shop] to the house or about any place," Turben explained.

Turben also praised the corral system that Whitmore suggested. Handling the beef cattle created extreme difficulty for Turben, so DVR approved the addition of a cement slab with a corral system on the north end of Turben's barn to easily sort the cattle.

This corral includes a head gate and head table to restrain the



Whitmore also recommended modifying Turben's tractors by adding steps.

cattle for dehorning and vaccinations.

When asked about the process, Turben said that everything ran smoothly, and that without the assistance from AAW, ESW FARM and DVR he probably would not

be farming now. "Everyone was excellent and really helped out," said Turben. He plans to continue increasing the size of his cow and calf operation and the number of beef cattle he raises each year for sale. Thanks to the assistance, Turben will be able to keep the multi-generation farm active for years to come. ■



The process started rolling with a visit from Bruce Whitmore, Rural Rehabilitation Specialist (right), with the ESW FARM Program, to Turben's farm for an assessment of the operation.

## WFC Launches Health Cooperative for Farmers

Affordable, quality health insurance is in sight for farmers and agribusinesses thanks to efforts led by the Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives (WFC) to create a new statewide, health insurance purchasing cooperative to strengthen Wisconsin's agriculture industry.

The Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin (FHCW) has been created under the "Co-op Care" law crafted by WFC to help farmers and small employers gain leverage in the health insurance market. While Co-op Care has spurred a handful of small employer cooperatives in various stages of development around the state, FHCW will be the first of its kind dedicated to serving Wisconsin farmers and agribusiness.

"FHCW is an innovative health care plan written by farmers for farmers and will provide health insurance designed to address the needs and wants of farmers and other agribusinesses at an affordable price," said Bill Oemichen, WFC president and CEO. "The quality of the insurance plans offered through the cooperative is comparable to those currently available only to larger businesses. Members will benefit from a choice of six products, the freedom to choose their own doctors and hospitals, first dollar coverage of preventive care and a comprehensive benefit package most farmers can't access today."

The cooperative is contracting with Aetna, one

of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, to underwrite the insurance for cooperative members.

Like other cooperatives, FHCW will be owned and governed by its farmer and agribusiness members, which means they will be directly involved in the financial and benefit decisions made by the cooperative. In developing the cooperative, Oemichen said WFC sought input from thousands of farmers to find out what is and isn't working in their current health care plans.

For example, Oemichen pointed out that most health care plans offered in the state do not provide coverage for injuries sustained while working, a practice that has proven devastating for a number of farmers who found out too late their coverage was lacking. "Most of our small family farms aren't required to purchase workers compensation coverage, and producers falsely believe their health insurance will cover these claims if they're hurt," Oemichen said. "Coverage through the Farmers' Health Cooperative is designed to meet this and many other needs unique to farming."

Farmers and businesses serving agriculture are invited to contact the Farmers Health Cooperative of Wisconsin for more information by calling (800) 539-9370 or by contacting its website at [www.farmerhealthcooperative.com](http://www.farmerhealthcooperative.com). Additional information about Aenta can be found at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com). ■

Submitted by: Dana Pronschinske, WFC Media Relations Director

## Partners...

As the newest member of the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM team I thought it would be important for our partners to learn more about my background and how my journey lead me to my employment with this organization.

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin, about 70 miles southwest of Madison. After taking over the farm thirty years ago from my grandfather, my father still owns and operates the farm, but converted from dairy to finishing beef and dairy steers in 2005. He also plants corn, alfalfa, and oats to support the beef operation. Growing up on a dairy farm, my roles included fieldwork, mending fences, feeding young stock, assisting in milking, or as you know... whatever task was relevant at the time.

After graduating from high school I attended Madison Area Technical College. I obtained an Associate degree in Occupational Therapy and I spent some time at University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse before obtaining my bachelor's degree in Business Management and Communications from Concordia University. I have worked at several rehabilitation sites and helped people with disabilities return function following a decrease in health status. My recent job was to manage a home modification program in the Dane county

area that benefited elderly and disabled individuals with the goal of modifications to help improve the person's ability to stay at home safely and independently.

I currently travel back to the farm on most weekends to help with a variety of jobs. One seemingly never-ending job is mending or replacing barbwire fence during the springtime in preparation of putting cattle to pasture. In return for my work on the farm, I house some Angus steers on the farm free of feed charge. In February I made the decision to pursue the challenge of joining the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program and AgrAbility. I feel as if my past experiences in my jobs and on the farm will help me in the position as a Rural Rehabilitation Specialist. I look forward to working out in the communities meeting farmers and assisting them in reaching their individual goals.



Jeff Kratochwill, ESW FARM Rural Rehabilitation Specialist

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ESW FARM Rural Rehabilitation Specialist

## The FARM Calf Project Progress Report

We are three months into this New Year and ready to start work with a new group of calves. Between subzero temperatures and inches of snow, the weather presented quite a few obstacles to safely transporting one calf from Spencer to Mineral Point. After a month of planning, our calf arrived safely at Mary Dunn's farm in Mineral Point, thanks to Paul Leverenz's father, Fred Leverenz, and Don Lee Happel. That will likely be the farthest that calf will travel in its lifetime.

We would like to express sincere thanks to Cargill Feeds for their recent donation. We always appreciate and



accept donations of sponsorship, feed, medicine, or transportation for the Calf Project. Please keep us in mind when deciding on a charitable contribution for this year. These contributions directly affect our farm service in your communities. We are also always looking for any who are interested in becoming a host farm. Feel free to contact me and I'll send you more information about the project and participation. T Ellenbecker (715) 842-3411 or (608) 2790-9437. ■

Submitted by: T. Ellenbecker, ESW FARM



### Plowing Ahead

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