

# SAFETY FIRST

## Transporting Equipment on Rural Roads...



With spring around the corner, farmers are starting to plan for the planting season. Part of this preparation includes transporting farm machinery, such as tillage and planting equipment. Caution is necessary because each year there are approximately 30,000 accidents reported involving farm equipment on rural roads. Many of these types of accidents and fatalities could be prevented by adhering to these suggestions:

- Use a tractor large and heavy enough for towing, steering, and braking control.
- Transport equipment in its narrowest transport configuration.
- Use transport links or locks to support

equipment; don't depend on the hydraulic system.

- Don't allow anyone to ride on equipment.
- Beware of overhead electrical lines; make sure raised wings or markers won't contact lines.
- Check with state police/sheriff's office for height and width regulations.
- Use safety chains and display the proper lights, reflectors and SMV emblem to alert motorists.

By following these safety points, everyone can have a safe and successful planting season this spring. ■

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### FEATURING:

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Continuation Allows for  
Success of Other Area  
Farmers*

*AgrAbility Welcomes New  
Staff Members*

*Safety First:  
Transporting Equipment  
on Rural Roads*

*ALSO LOOK FOR:  
Partners...  
by Bruce Whitmore, ESW  
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# AgrAbility of Wisconsin Plowing Ahead

## Mielke Way Farms Continuation Allows for Success of Other Area Farmers

Farming is in Dennis and Ken Mielkes' blood. As young men working by their father's side, they knew they wanted to farm for the rest of their lives. Initially, Mielke Way Farms, Inc., was a dairy operation, but after years of milking, the brothers physically could not perform the day-to-day tasks. Thus, they converted the farm operation to crops, custom fieldwork and custom heifer raising.

Over the years, Dennis ex-

perienced several falls. The first tore cartilage in his left knee. He compensated for this injury by putting more stress on his hip, causing that joint to begin to deteriorate. Then a second fall broke a piece of bone off of his hip. Arthritis and diabetes aggravated Dennis's joint problems. Ken also experienced problems with

his knees, eventually requiring knee replacements so he could continue working. Thanks to Dennis's son and daughter helping with the day-to-day activities, they were able to complete the work, but with increasing difficulty.

Dennis learned about AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) from a former AAW client who participated alongside Dennis on a milk testing board. Dennis thought about it, but didn't contact AAW until after reading about the program in a farm paper six months later. Since Ken also had health problems, and Dennis thought the program was a good idea, he went along with it and signed up as well.

At the time, there was still a waiting list and the brothers waited about two years before the case was activated with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Once DVR activated their cases, Dennis and Ken took active roles in the services provided by AAW, Easter Seals FARM Program Reha-

bilitation specialist, Holly Allen, and DVR Counselor, Nancy Prokash. The brothers situation began to improve after that. One obvious solution for their joint problems was to install additional steps on all the farm tractors. However, the IH 3588 that Dennis and Ken frequently used for day-to-day farm operations piv-



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oted in the center and did not allow for steps to be added. So Allen suggested installing a platform lift



Thanks to the used skid steer the brothers found, Ken is able to perform many of the day-to-day work with greater ease.

and modifying the clutch and brake with hand controls. The modification costs were high, though, so the Mielkes, Prokash and Allen decided to explore the possibility of purchasing a used tractor to fit the brothers' needs. Since the Mielkes knew what they needed and had the experience of purchasing used equipment, they played an intricate role in finding a tractor that would accommodate their needs. After several attempts, everything fell into place and the Mielkes found a 1988 IH 7120. Dennis explained that by researching the equipment and taking the time to search for a tractor, he was able to find something in good condition at a reasonable price.

Dennis found the tractor at a John Deere dealership, but they were not able to trade in the IH 3588. So Dennis and Ken worked out a plan with DVR that the brothers would sell the tractor and use the income from the sale to finish retrofitting the other tractors with the additional steps and cameras to aid in backing up.

Used equipment also helped with some of Ken's concerns. He operated a tractor to haul gravel, seed bags and bales, and pick rocks from the fields manually. After researching Ken's needs and the accommodations needed for the tractor, the Mielkes and Allen found that the accommodations would not be compatible with the tractor. Again, the brothers found a used skid steer with hand controls and a used rotating stone bucket attachment at the same dealership they found the tractor.

Thanks to Dennis's willingness to do some extra searching, he was able to find used equipment in good condition and reasonably priced. "We talked a lot back and forth. Dennis would come up with an idea and run it past me. I would then explain it to Nancy," said Allen. She noted that there was never just one answer for anything; there were always a couple of different options.

Allen also suggested a utility vehicle for Dennis and Ken to easily move around the farm. After researching the vehicle types, Dennis decided on a Kubota. Allen explained that she learned much from Dennis. "He was so conscious of the equipment, based on usage, based on dollars and the overall approach. Dennis wanted to make sure the equipment was the best thing for him and the farm."

Dennis and Ken plan to continue farming with Dennis's son for another 10 to 15 years and may start custom raising heifers again. Thanks to the assistive technology Dennis and Ken received, not only will the Mielkes continue to successfully farm, but so will other farmers that depend on the Mielke brothers for custom work.



All the tractors on the Mielke Way Farm will be equipped with additional tractor steps to allow the brothers to get in and out of the tractors with less difficulty.

Dennis explained that when he received the IH 7120, a farmer they have been chopping and bagging for since 1992 asked about the tractor and the program. Dennis told him that

this tractor was keeping Dennis and Ken going and the farmer told Dennis that not only was it keeping him (Dennis) going, but also it was keeping his own farm going. Dennis said, "It (AAW) not only benefited us, it's benefiting other farmers too." ■

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# Partners...

Greetings From Across the Fence

It was a little over five years ago that I began this job assisting you hard working folks. I have had the pleasure of visiting your farms in most areas of the state. I have seen areas of the state that I had not seen before. I think my car can automatically drive to Wausau and turn west, to Tomah/Sparta and turn south, to the Richland Center area and turn several directions and also to south central Wisconsin. I have seen the central sands, the north central, the coulees, the rolling hills of far southwestern Wisconsin, and some in the far northwest that I refer to as "Canada." Your farms have been on the flat, open land, on the highways, on the rolling hills with a view for miles, on ridges named for some long ago settlers, on the back roads, and tucked privately way up one of the coulees. At last count, I have visited a little over two hundred of your farms – your estates.

A few years ago one of my former colleagues wrote a "Partner's Piece" about talking with the farmers she served, "across the kitchen table." I have also talked with you across your kitchen tables, across the bulk tanks, across barn alleys, in the sheds, beside the tractors, and around your farmsteads.

In one aspect, we are on two sides of a proverbial fence. You folks are on the farm side of the fence and I, my colleagues, and our partners such as those at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are on the assisting side. It has been said that "good fences make good neighbors." The fences of property lines were meant to keep one's livestock on their property and the neighbor's out. This seems to be less of a concern in the last years. Farmers

switching to confinement housing and enlarged farms have seen the "cleaning out" of the fence lines. The dozers and the backhoes have taken care of that!

Hopefully, in our work with you, we have been able to "clean out" the fence lines between the parties involved. The exchange of your ideas, our ideas, and training of our partner agencies has helped to remove the "brush, rocks and boulders," of our fence lines and provided service to those who ask. Our goal and our task is to assist you in remaining on the farms you love, performing the tasks that you love and enjoying the lifestyle that you have chosen. From our farm visits and the exchange of ideas, together, we have developed plans of assistance within boundaries and restrictions under which AgrAbility and our partners must operate. From comments made by farmers that we have worked with I think we have succeeded. We will continue to work toward that end.

As I end this piece, let me say that it has been a pleasure to try to assist all of the farmers I have met. Your job is hard but you have trudged on. If I had my "druthers" I would be farming but God puts strange turns in our roads. At this point in time, it seems my route has been to assist you farmers. It has been rewarding. I look forward to meeting more of you!

*Bruce Whitmore*  
ESW FARM Rehabilitation Specialist

## AgrAbility Welcomes New Staff Members

AgrAbility introduced two new staff members at the beginning of the month; they are Paul Untiet and Cindy Lueck.

Paul Untiet, ESW Rehabilitation Specialist, will provide information and referral support to new clients of the program. He comes to Easter Seals after working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for 30 years as a vocational counselor in the central Wisconsin area, specializing in mental health, hearing loss and farm service cases. He grew up on a dairy farm in Stratford, WI and enjoyed working with the farming community while with DVR. He is looking forward to working with AgrAbility clients as he settles into his new role.

Cindy Lueck, ESW Rehabilitation Special-

ist, will visit farmers and provide assessments in Northwest Wisconsin. Cindy was a registered nurse for 25 years and operated a dairy farm with her husband since 1989. Her nursing career focused around mental health, hospice, nursing home and home care. She looks forward to meeting and working with farmers in Northern Wisconsin.

Look for Paul and Cindy's articles in the Partners section of the upcoming Plowing Ahead Newsletters.

### Plowing Ahead

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