

# SAFETY FIRST

*During Wisconsin's Spring Planting Season*

## Springtime Hazards Can Be Deadly

It's that time of the year when farmers are shifting gears and revving up to begin a new season. With different chores and daily tasks there also are some hazards or potentially hazardous situations that farmers may not have thought about in a while.

**1 Chemicals.** This may include anhydrous ammonia, insecticides, and other chemicals used during the planting season that pose acute and chronic health hazards. The best way to prevent injury from any chemical is to follow the guidelines on the product label, wear the recommended protective clothing listed on the label, check that equipment used with the chemicals is in good working order, always have a first aid kit and fresh water available to use if chemicals are spilled on you, and have some way to call for help such as a cell phone or two way radio in case of an emergency.

**2 Machinery that has been sitting all winter.** Don't assume the equipment is safe and in good working condition. Check that all guards and shields are in place and make sure it has been properly serviced which will help reduce breakdowns in the field. Before proceeding onto the road, check all lights to make sure they are working properly and that you have SMV

emblems that are clean and not faded. Also, consider adding extra lights such as flashing amber lights or turn signals to increase your visibility to other motorists.

**3 Tractor overturns.** These can happen quickly and unexpectedly and not just on steep hillsides. Something as small as an unseen or new sinkhole, hay bale, or pile of fence posts can cause a rollover. Wheels slipping off the edge of a road, driveway, or ditch can cause tractors to overturn. Improperly hitching and incorrectly pulling stuck machinery can cause a rear overturn. To reduce the chance of an overturn use wide front end tractors with proper weights and ballast. To reduce the chance of injury or death in an overturn use tractors with Roll Over Protective Structures (ROPS) and wear the seatbelt. Before heading out to work check fields, especially hillsides, for hidden hazards, and if you need to hitch a chain or rope to the tractor only hitch it to the drawbar.

Spring is a busy season, but take time to talk with family members and employees about how to make it as safe as possible. ■

*Submitted by: Curt Wilke, UW-Extension Outreach Safety Specialist.*

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Madison, WI  
Permit No. 658



Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Spring 2004  
Volume 12 No. 4

### FEATURING:

**AgrAbility Assists Cambria Woman in Achieving her Goals**

**For the Health of it! Joint Protection with Arthritis**

**Springtime Hazards can be Deadly**

**ALSO LOOK FOR:**

**Partners...**  
by Lynnette Horwath,  
Arthritis Foundation,  
Wisconsin Chapter

*AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the UW Cooperative Extension Service and Easter Seals Wisconsin.*

*Printing is donated by Rural Insurance Companies.*





# AgrAbility of Wisconsin

# Plowing Ahead

## AgrAbility Assists Cambria Woman in Achieving her Goals

*by Gloria Hafemeister, Wisconsin State Farmer*



Elaine Hendrickson, Cambria, would never be able to perform her daily tasks of feeding calves, caring for 39 llamas and running a successful carding and woolen mill business without the help of AgrAbility of Wisconsin.

Hendrickson has had a disease of the joints [connective tissue disease] since her youth and had her first knee replacement in 1991. She wore a leg brace for 30 years.

No longer able to milk cows or handle tractor work, she is the calf raiser on the farm she operates with her husband and son, working with the calves from newborn to breeding age. She is responsible for feeding and watering young dairy stock and her llamas [which originated when she bought two male llamas for pets in 1984 to as she describes, "to cheer herself up."]

She was always discouraged from staying in farming and was even told to find a job that wouldn't require physical labor. But she admits, "When farming is your life and you like what you are doing, it isn't that easy to just quit. And I wasn't about to sit around. I want to keep my joints moving as long as I can."

With milk prices the way they are, she also felt her husband and son needed her help with at least calf care on the farm, even when she could no longer milk or drive tractor.

*"When farming is your life and you like what you are doing, it isn't that easy to just quit. And I wasn't about to sit around."  
-- Elaine Hendrickson*

When she began working with AgrAbility, however, Paul Leverenz, [Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program director and AgrAbility partner,] came to her farm to look things over. He spotted numerous ways the daily tasks on the farm could be made easier. He helped her figure out ways to lighten the load by making water more easily accessible for the animals and by providing steps instead of a ladder in the llama barn.

She worked with AgrAbility and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in her county, as well as the Business Enterprise Service Training (BEST) program. Once the determination was

made what she needed to stay on the job, she received financial assistance for making the changes from DVR.

These changes, she stresses, have allowed her to continue completing her chores and



*Along with caring for Coed Mawr Dairy's calves, Hendrickson is responsible for her fiber animals and enjoys doing "wonderful things with the llama fiber." continued on page 2...*

continued from page 1... getting tasks done in a more efficient manner.

A trailer for marketing her wool business and an electric spinning wheel were also purchased by DVR.

Leverenz also helped figure out a better location for the calves so they would be on a flat surface where she can care for them out of the snow and ice. Hutches are now in a lean-to building where water and supplies are readily accessible. The next step is to replace the solid fiberglass hutches with pens that are open on top because she

“Working with the calves, the llamas and my woolen mill is what keeps me going. I don't know what I would do if I had to sit.”  
-- Elaine Hendrickson

is unable to maneuver into the current pens if one is down or needs assistance.

They also acquired a grain bin that eliminates the need to lift heavy bags.

She comments, “Working with the calves, the llamas and my woolen mill is what keeps me going. I don't know what I would do if I had to sit.” ■

**Editor's Note:** This article was reprinted with permission from the February 20, 2004 Wisconsin State Farmer.



Replacing the llama barn ladder with steps has made it possible for Hendrickson to rely less on others to complete her llama chores.



The addition of a bunk feeder and hydrant for the heifers, as well as a llama waterer reduced carrying and lifting for Hendrickson.

## For the Health of it!

### Joint Protection with Arthritis

Through activities of daily living your joints and extremities incur physical stress. The tips below offer guidelines for the two most prevalent types of arthritis.

#### PROTECTING JOINTS - OSTEOARTHRITIS

- Maintain your ideal body weight.** The more you weigh, the more stress you are putting on your joints, especially your hips, knees, back and feet.
- Move your body.** Exercise protects joints by strengthening the muscles around them. Strong muscles keep your joints from rubbing against one another, wearing down cartilage.
- Stand up straight.** Good posture protects the joints in your neck, back, hips and knees.
- Use the big joints.** When lifting or carrying, use largest and strongest joints and muscles. This will help avoid injury and strain on your smaller joints.
- Pace yourself.** Alternate periods

of heavy activity with periods of rest or light activities. Repetitive stress on joints for long periods of time can accelerate the wear and tear that causes OA.

- Listen to your body.** If you are in pain, don't ignore it. Pain after activity or exercise can be an indication that you have overstressed your joints.
- Don't be static.** Changing positions regularly will decrease the stiffness in your muscles and joints.
- Forget the weekend warrior.** Don't engage in activities for which your body isn't prepared. Start new activities slowly and safely until you know how your body will react to them. This will reduce the chance of injury.
- Wear proper safety equipment.** Don't leave helmets and wrist pads at home. Make sure you get safety gear that is comfortable and fits appropriately.

- Ask for help.** Don't try to do a job that is too big for you to handle. Get another pair of hands to help out.

#### JOINT PROTECTION PRACTICES FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

- Turn your hand toward the thumb side.** Prevents ulnar drift.
- Keep your fingers extended when working with your hands.** Constantly maintaining a tight grip can contribute to joint subluxations.
- Use the strongest joints available for an activity.** Prolonged use of a joint in a stressful activity can contribute to joint instability.
- Use both hands to do as many tasks as possible; when feasible use your non-dominant hand.** Bilateral use contributes to even distribution of stress on the joints.



## Partners...

In today's health care scene arthritis gets the attention of cold oatmeal. Most people do not take arthritis seriously. The commercials on TV don't help. They hint that arthritis is only "minor aches and pains", and claim that their medications will make it possible for you to dance the night away. Unfortunately, these types of messages perpetuate the myth that arthritis is no big deal.

Here at the Arthritis Foundation, Wisconsin Chapter, we DO take arthritis seriously, and individuals in the farming industry are at high risk. Perhaps if I point out that arthritis is the leading cause of disability in America today, I will catch your attention. If you are impressed with data, you should know that one in four Wisconsin residents suffer with chronic joint symptoms or arthritis. It IS time to seriously consider how arthritis could impact your work and your quality of life, if it has not already done so. The good news is that arthritis is a disease where proper self-management techniques can make a huge difference and it can minimize pain and fatigue, while improving flexibility and mobility.

Let me back up and clarify that arthritis is not one disease, but an umbrella term that covers over 100 different diseases. While the largest number of people who suffer with arthritis have degenerative joint disease, or osteoarthritis, an early diagnosis is important because of the many inflammatory forms of arthritis. Much serious joint destruction can go on in the first two years in inflammatory arthritis. These diseases can seriously affect other organs in the body as well.

- Change positions frequently.** Static, long-term positioning can cause joint fatigue & immobility.
- Use long, sweeping strokes which require increased motion at shoulders, elbows, wrists.**
- Push or roll objects rather than lifting or carrying them.**
- Employ proper body mechanics whenever possible.**

Prolonged and repeated use in stressful patterns can contribute to the development of deformities (in RA) and lead to limitations in strength, movement, and dexterity. The amount of stress placed on the joints can be reduced by utilizing the above techniques. These principles will protect your joints and continue to maximize their functioning. ■

Prompt diagnosis and aggressive treatment are vital to long term care for people with these types of arthritis.

As a farmer, your risk for osteoarthritis is greater than the general population, and the aging process increases this risk. Repetitive motion activities that you perform wear out the cartilage, which cushions the joints. While joint replacement surgery is an option in later stages of the disease, proper self-management can make a significant difference in your quality of life and may prevent serious complications. Proper body weight is key to managing osteoarthritis of the knees and hips (and in some cases can prevent it), so there is additional reason to work on reducing any extra pounds you may have.

The Arthritis Foundation can help you maintain a good quality of life with arthritis. Our Arthritis Self-Help Course, plus our land based and aquatics warm water exercise programs maintain or improve range of motion, flexibility and endurance. People report significantly less pain as of result of participating in any of these programs. If you would like educational literature on arthritis, please call our Information and Referral Line (1-800-242-9422) during business hours. We can send you brochures and answer your arthritis related questions. Also check out our website at [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org). We have an extensive section of information in Spanish which you can access if you are Hispanic, or if your farm employs Hispanic workers.

Please don't live with the mindset that arthritis is not serious. But I hope I've explained that YOU can have an important impact on how arthritis affects your life. Take an active approach by learning how to manage your disease today for strong, functional joints tomorrow!

**Lynnette Horwath**

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Published by AgrAbility of Wisconsin.  
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This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number 2002-41590-01371. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA. If you need this material in another format, please contact AgrAbility of Wisconsin at (608) 262-9336.