

Farm kids learn to play it safe

By **Mary MacArthur**
Camrose bureau

PINE LAKE, Alta. — Rebecca Wozniczka came to the day-long camp on farm safety because her mother thought it would be a good idea.

By the end of the day, Wozniczka was glad she came. Even though she lives on a farm she never realized there were so many hazards.

She admits to riding in the tractor bucket and going "full out" across the field on the all-terrain vehicle, things she now knows can lead straight to accidents and death.

Awareness and a second thought before roaring across the field on an all-terrain vehicle is all Al North was hoping for when he volunteered to

talk about the increasingly popular farm vehicles.

"If you can plant a few seeds, that's so important," said North, who sells ATVs from his Scottsville Sports store in Red Deer.

North said he tries to tell it straight to parents and children that ATVs are dangerous machines. People get killed each year because they drive too fast, don't wear safety equipment or do foolish things.

"I love selling them, but I would sooner sell with the aspect of safety behind it than just selling it. I try to educate the parents when they come in with the kids."

North said he tries to make it clear if buyers can afford an \$8,000 machine they can afford to spend a few

extra dollars on proper safety equipment.

After listening to North, Megan Dreeshen vowed to wear the helmet gathering dust on the shelf the next time she rides the ATV.

It isn't cool to wear a helmet, said Dreeshen, of Pine Lake: "None of the kids my age wear them."

But that was before she learned of the growing number of bike accidents.

"I didn't think there were so many ATV accidents. It's kind of scary, all the accidents."

Dangerous equipment

It's not just the ATV statistics that have Dreeshen shocked. It's the poisonous chemicals in the shed, and the grain augers which can rip off a leg in seconds, or the livestock or equipment that can be dangerous.

"It's scary with all the close calls on the farm."

Raising an awareness of farm accidents was the goal of the first Kids Farm Safety Day organized by the Alberta Women's Institutes chapters of Red Deer Centre, Red Deer West and Innisfail.

Faye Mayberry said she got the idea after reading about a similar farm safety demonstration in Ontario.

"We want the kids to become aware of what is safe and unsafe around them," said Mayberry, the WI agriculture convener.

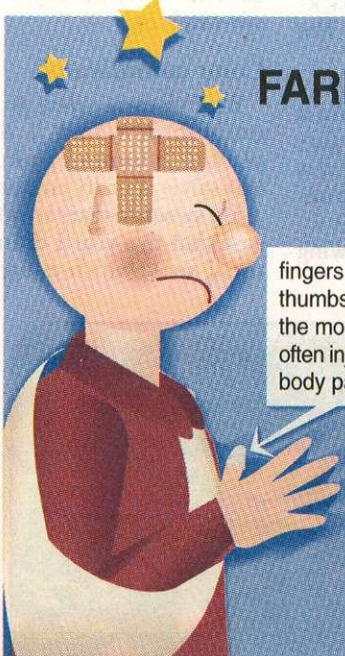
Teaching farm children about safety is also a good way to get in the back door to teaching their parents to be more safe, she said.

"If we can teach them what's safe then they'll develop a positive attitude toward farm safety. They'll take that message to mom and dad."

Mayberry isn't sure if the safety day will become an annual event because of the massive organization required to bring together volunteers, equipment dealers, firefighters and farm specialists.

Instead of having an annual event at Pine Lake, other WI branches across the province may be able to look at the model and repeat the safety day in their area.

"I'd like to see us partner up with various groups and businesses and we can run the program across the province."



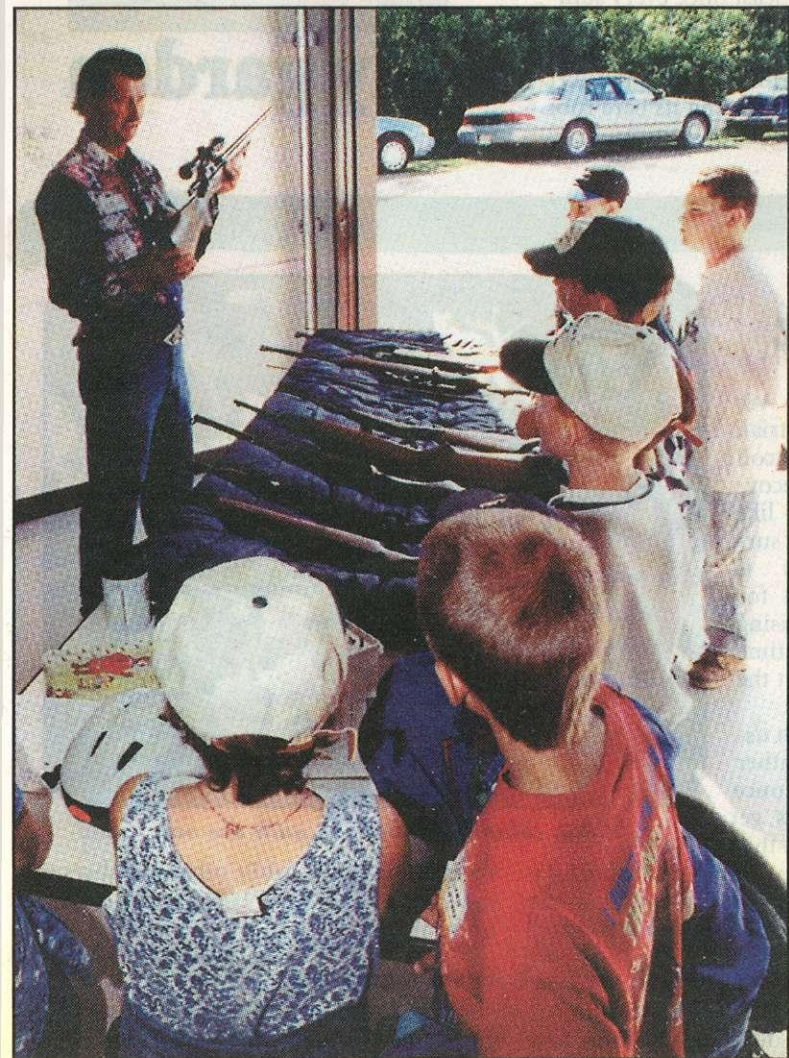
FARM SAFETY FACTS

- There were 1,673 farm-related accidents reported in Alberta in 1996. Some facts:
- The most accident-prone month is **MAY**. The least accident-prone month is **JANUARY**.
- The most dangerous days of the week are **SATURDAY** and **MONDAY**.
- Men** are four times as likely to be injured as **women**.
- The riskiest age group is **35-44**.
- Injuries involving **livestock** account for 38% of the total, while **farm machinery** injured another 33%.
- The most frequent injury-causing power tool on the farm is a **grinder**.

fingers and thumbs are the most often injured body parts.

Source: Staff research

WP graphic by Michelle Houlden



WP photos by Mary MacArthur

John Dyck teaches the basics of firearm safety.



Children are told about safety around tractors and bales.