



FACT SHEET 7.5

EQUIPMENT SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE BASICS

Hobby farm equipment will vary from one farm to another often based on the size of the hobby farm and the types of activities. Typical equipment includes: garden tools, wheelbarrow or hand cart, rototiller, lawn mower and small electric or gas power equipment.

Some hobby farms might even have a small tractor, utility vehicle and/or livestock trailer. Whether it's a large piece of complex equipment or a simple hand tool, safety and maintenance is important to prevent injuries and protect nearby water resources.

STAY ON TRACK

Read and Follow the Owner's Manual - Before using any equipment, read the manual to be familiar with its operation, maintenance, and any warnings.

EQUIPMENT STORAGE, FUELING, AND MAINTENANCE

All hobby farm equipment should be stored, fueled and maintained in a manner that reduces the potential for injury and the likelihood of chemicals to be released into the environment. One way is to store equipment indoors, on a hard, impermeable surface to prevent any potential leaks from coming into contact with soils. Be sure to fuel and maintain equipment on an impermeable surface and under cover, but not indoors, if possible.

Follow these safety tips for hobby farm equipment storage, fueling, and maintenance:

Storage

- When parking vehicles, use the 'Safe Stop' method where you: stop in a safe place, apply the handbrake, disengage, lower any attachments, turn off the engine and remove the key.
- Immediately clean up spills and leaks of fuel or maintenance fluids which can occur under and around stored power equipment. Be sure to keep a spill cleanup kit nearby.
- Do not wash areas containing spills – use dry methods such as absorbent pads and socks or even clean kitty litter whenever possible.

CAUTION!

If a petroleum spill of more than 10 gallons occurs, or if any size spill reaches a waterbody or storm drain, you should call the fire department (911), then the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection at their 24-hour spill reporting hotline (1-888-304-1133)

CAUTION!

Many hobby farms have portable generators for use during a power loss. There are inherent hazards associated with generator use and if operated incorrectly could lead to electrocution, carbon monoxide poisoning, or fire to name a few. The following link provides basic generator safety tips to help ensure safe use of your portable generator - www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/portable_generator_safety.pdf

Fueling

- When filling gas canisters, always place the canister on the ground before filling.
- Do not refuel equipment near a wetland or water resource area.
- Do not top off fuel tanks.
- Never leave equipment unattended while fueling.

Maintenance

- Follow maintenance procedures and schedules found in the equipment manual – regular maintenance can prevent equipment failure and fuel spills during operation.
- Collect and recycle oil, transmission fluid, and hydraulic fluid whenever possible. Recycling often removes this material from your hobby farm as well as the potential for accidental spills.
- Leaks can occur after maintenance so placing a clean piece of cardboard or drip pan (if outside) underneath the equipment can help detect leaks.
- Check the fluids regularly (engine oil, transmission fluid, coolant level, etc.) – low levels may indicate a leak.

Enforce the “No Riders” Rule

Most tractors are not equipped to accommodate extra riders or passengers, especially children. Unless your tractor has an ‘instructor seat’, extra riders are at risk of severe injury or death due to being crushed by the tractor or trailing equipment in the event of an accident. Sudden stops, sharp turns or holes can easily cause a rider to be thrown from the tractor – even tractors with enclosed cabs. No matter how slow you are driving, you cannot stop a tractor before it rolls over a thrown rider. A “NO RIDERS” rule for all tractors at all times may be the single best way you can assure the safety of others.

THOUSANDS OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN OCCUR EVERY YEAR IN FARM ENVIRONMENTS, INVOLVING FARM MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT AND ANIMALS.



The following links include useful information on how to keep children safe in a farm environment:

- www.farmsafety4kids.net
- www.uvm.edu/extension/youth/youthfarmsafety/?Page=resources.html

WATER QUALITY BENEFIT

Store, fuel and maintain all farm equipment properly and away from wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes, ponds and storm drains. Doing this can help eliminate leaks and spills and keep hazardous materials out of nearby surface waters.