



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Preventing fall injuries for farmers over 55

Federal Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today launched a guide aimed at reducing the number of serious and potentially fatal falls experienced by Australian farmers over 55 while working on their farms.

Mrs Elliot was joined at the launch outside of Perth today by Federal Member for Hasluck, Ms Sharryn Jackson MP and Associate Professor Lyn Fragar AO, Director, Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, University of Sydney

“Eliminating falls is an important part of the Australian Government’s efforts in preventive health - around 30 per cent of injury-related deaths in Australia are due to falls,” Mrs Elliot said.

“Falls can result in serious injury, including admission to hospital – and they are the most common reason for premature admission into residential aged care.

“Australian farmers are at extra risk of injury given the dangers of the physical work they perform. Avoiding falls can help them remain active, independent and able to stay on their land,” Mrs Elliot said.

The Australian Government committed nearly \$200,000 to the Australian Centre for Agriculture Health and Safety, University of Sydney, for the booklet *Preventing Falls for Older Farmers*.

Mrs Elliot said the booklet outlines practical ways that farmers can reduce the risk of injury on the farm as well as providing self risk assessments.

“Falls on farms can be from horses, vehicles, machinery, ladders and silos - as well as conditions such as ice, mud and liquids on ground or floor surfaces. Poor tread on footwear can also contribute to falls,” Mrs Elliot said.

“The Australian Centre for Agriculture Health and Safety should be commended for its work in the area of farm safety and for preparing this booklet,” Mrs Elliot said.

The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, University of Sydney found that 20 percent of people aged 55 and over are admitted to hospital due to on-farm injury caused by falls.

The research also found 11.6 percent of deaths for people over 55 years, were due to farm related falls in 1999-2002.

The booklet complements other activities that aim to prevent injuries in farming communities.

The Australian Government's *National Injury Prevention Program* has also contributed funds for the development of a rural water safety pilot and a three year *National Child Safety on Farms Strategy* - as well as national programs to improve safety associated with farm machinery and operation of all-terrain vehicles. The falls prevention program complements the Safety of Older Farmers program also funded under the Prevention Program.

The outcomes of these initiatives have aided the prevention of injuries in communities and development of a national injury prevention strategy.

The facts on falls in Australia:

- Unintentional falls were the most common cause of injury death in 2003-04. There were 2,960 deaths resulting from falls*.
- Unintentional falls were also the most cause of injury hospitalisation. There were 123,461 hospitalisations resulting from falls**.
- Most falls-related deaths and hospitalisations were in people aged over 65 years.
- Managing injuries resulting from falls in older people is one of the major contributors to the national injury burden.

**Source: Injury Deaths, Australia 2003-04, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Injury Surveillance Unit (2007).*

***Source: Hospital separations due to injury and poisoning, Australia, 2003-04, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Injury Surveillance Unit (2007).*

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280