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PRESS RELEASE

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ATVS: GREAT TOOL – REAL RISKS

Understand the risks ATV riders face.

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All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) and Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV) are great tools in the feedyard. However, all operators must be made aware of the unique hazards they present and the real risk of injury or death if they're not operated safely.

Identifying ATV safety principles is one of the aims of Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH). This University of Nebraska Medical Center group (<https://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/feedyard/>) is conducting two research projects (funded by National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health) that are designed to make a positive impact on the sustainability of cattle feedyards through increased safety and health efforts.

It's recommended that only adults over the age of 18 should operate an ATV or UTV in a feedyard setting. Everyone who operates the vehicle should read the accompanying manual, complete hands-on operation instruction, and demonstrate competency to properly handle the vehicle.

Since equipment failure – such as defective brakes – can result in an ATV or UTV accident, each vehicle should be thoroughly inspected prior to each use. In addition to the equipment mechanics, tires should be inspected for condition and appropriate pressure, driveshaft or chain condition should be reviewed, lights, ignition/stop switches, and secure wheel nuts/pins should all be checked.

All riders must wear appropriate clothing, including a DOT-compliant helmet, goggles, long pants, long sleeved shirt, gloves, and over-the-ankle study boots with a low heel. Vehicles

designed for one rider should never carry a passenger. For machines designed for two passengers, no more than two should be allowed.

Anytime the ATV/UTV is used to carry a load, ensure that the weight is properly balanced and secured to a rack intended for hauling.

Operators should be familiar with the area of operation and aware of any steep inclines, uneven terrain, bumps, holes, etc. Never operate the vehicle at excessive speeds. Driving speed should always match weather and visibility conditions, terrain, and operator experience. Any attempt to do wheelies, jumps, or other stunts should never be tolerated.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), "inexperienced drivers face a higher risk of injury according to the recreational data collected by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). During the first month of operation, new recreational ATV drivers have an injury rate 13 times higher than the overall average injury rate for ATV operators. Further, the CPSC's data indicate that almost half the injured drivers had less than one year of experience and on-fourth of injured drivers had less than one month of experience."

Operators should be instructed to use extra caution when approaching any hill, tur, or obstacle. All terrain hazards – ruts, culverts, large rocks, wires, fences, etc. – should be conspicuously marked in areas where ATV/UTVs are frequently operated.

ATV/UTVs were not designed for use on paved surfaces and may be difficult to control when driven on pavement or on a highway. If it's absolutely necessary to operate an ATV/UTV on a public road, it must have headlights and taillights illuminated, operated by a licensed driver, covered by liability insurance, and operated at a speed not to exceed 30mph.

Never operate an ATV/UTV while impaired by a condition that may impact your driving abilities.

"Workhorse" ATV/UTVs are best suited to four-wheeled, designed for power, traction, and stability. Recreational models are built for speed and thrills and are not suitable for a workplace.

Some models have a low-pressure balloon tire suspension system. With added speed or on rough terrain they tend to bounce and pitch up and down and from side to side. Controlling the machine becomes more difficult and riding is more tiring.

Some models have a suspension system only on the front wheels, other models include suspension systems on all four wheels. Some use only coil springs, others use both shock absorbers and coil springs. The system with both coil springs and shock absorbers provide the best traction, maximum control, and the smoothest ride. Other models are more likely to cause or aggravate back and/or leg problems.

For most agricultural operations, an ATV/UTV with automatic clutch, reverse gear, shaft drive, and a differential with a locking mechanism is appropriate. A power take-off is featured on some models for operating attachments such as mowers, spray equipment, and other accessories.

ATV/UTVs are equipped with engines ranging from less than 100 cc to over 500 cc and with gear ratios that permit speeds in excess of 50mph. The use of the vehicle should determine the size of the engine and gear ratio. There are few, if any, justifications for a maximum speed of more than 20-25 mph for ATV/UTVs in agricultural operations. Serious ATV/UTV accidents often involve higher speeds.

Additional vehicle features include front and rear brakes with independent controls. Rear fenders and foot peg or rest should be designed to make it difficult or impossible for the foot to slip off and be caught under the rear wheel.

The ATV/UTV muffler, exhaust and other hot engine components should be located, or guarded, to prevent burns. The design should also prevent the buildup of dry trash near hot exhaust parts to reduce the risk of fire.

If attachments and implements are used, use those brands specifically manufactured for the model. Only use the attachments as the manufacturer intended and comply with all manufacturer recommendations.

In recent years, rural Nebraska hospitals are seeing an increase in severe ATV injuries. In 2018, The University of Nebraska Medical Center, the University of Nebraska Extension and the Nebraska Safety Center at the University of Nebraska at Kearney began presenting training sessions to adults and children in more than 50 cities across Nebraska. The training includes safety practices such as proper personal protective equipment and a demonstration with an ATV simulator on the proper way to ride.

The most common cause of agricultural-related deaths in Nebraska is ATVs and overturned tractors. In an ATV accident, the first parts of the body likely to be impacted are the head and neck. Those who survive roll-over ATV/UTV incidents may be paralyzed or sustain an injury that affects them for the remainder of their life.

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