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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*By UNMC, Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, Omaha, NE*

**BLINDED BY BLIND SPOTS?**

Don't

Every day, feedyard traffic includes feed trucks, ATVs, payloaders, tractors, semitrucks, and pickups. Within that traffic mix are pen riders on horseback, both employees and visitors on foot and an occasional car.

Despite a traffic plan to help manage all this activity, every feedyard must cope with a trait common to all of this traffic: blind spots.

Identifying feedyard vehicle 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.

Blind spots are the areas to the sides and rear of any vehicle that cannot be seen in either rear or side mirrors. Sometimes drivers can physically turn

around to see what might be in their blind spots. But the larger the vehicle the bigger the blind spot area and the less likely that the driver can see anyone or anything hidden by the blind spot.

Agricultural Safety Consultant, Gordon Moore, says the most dangerous thing about blind spots around vehicles is the lack of awareness that they even exist.

“How far do you think a blind spot extends when you’re behind the wheel of a feedyard feed truck?” Moore asks. “It’s as much as 25 feet before you can see the ground. That means a man that’s 5’8” or 5’9” can easily be hidden in that blind spot and the feed truck driver won’t have any idea he’s there.”

Feed trucks also have extensive blind spots on each side and to their rear. Depending on the size of the truck, blind spots on the right side of the truck and to its rear could be as deep as 36 feet.

Often, when a feedyard worker on horseback or afoot feels a truck driver deliberately attempts to run them over, the problem is really that they’re lost in the truck driver’s blind spot.

“Standard pickups also have major blind spots along both sides and the rear,” Moore says. “Due to the headrests, toolboxes, tailgates, etc. there can be a rear blind spot that’s up to 120 feet long. This is a huge safety issue at feedyards.”

Blind spots for payloader drivers can be even deeper than those experienced by truck and pickup drivers. In training sessions, depending on the payloader bucket size, Moore has concealed as many as 30 people in front of a payloader where the driver can’t see them.

“And that’s when the bucket is riding as low as 18 inches off the ground,” Moore says. “You expect that the driver of a payloader should be so high up in the air that they can see everything from that vantage point. That’s just not true.”

Advancing technology makes it possible for vehicles like payloaders to feature a rearview camera. However, if the camera lens is dirty, rear view vision is still greatly impaired.

It's common for feed trucks to back up when feeding in order to clear the truck hopper. In most feedyards, the truck has the right of way when it comes to traffic policy. However, if someone near the truck is unaware of the rules, tragedy can occur when the truck backs over someone or something that wasn't visible to the driver.

"On the feedyard, traffic moves the same way it does in England," Moore says. "People drive opposite to the way we drive down the highway because the driver's side of the feedtruck is next to the bunk when they're feeding."

Although speed limits are posted on feedyards, speeding is often a common practice. When visiting feedyards, Moore has witnessed vehicles moving as fast as 20mph to 25mph.

"On feedyards, ATVs are typically used to move cattle and they go fast," Moore says. "That's dangerous for a number of reasons."

ATVs are often used as a substitute for pickups, horses or walking. Speed, terrain and load size all affect the operation of an ATV. Steep or uneven terrain can quickly lead to an ATV overturn. Potential for ATV accidents is greatly increased any time speed exceeds 25mph. Braking on an ATV can also lead to loss of control or turnovers.

Herding animals with an ATV can be especially hazardous. Quick or tight turns, hitting a rock or hole with the ATV front end could result in a rollover. Severe or fatal injury can occur in this kind of scenario.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while operating an ATV can help reduce risk of serious or fatal injury. Depending on the agricultural setting, ATV riders should consider wearing a helmet, face shields and goggles and quality footwear, such as over-the-ankle, tightly-laced work shoes or boots. Long-sleeved shirts, full-length pants and well-padded gloves are also recommended. Avoid loose-fitting clothing which could catch on an obstacle.

ATV maintenance should be regularly completed , ensuring that tires have recommended air

pressure and all nuts and bolts are secured. The ATV throttle should move smoothly and brakes should be tested prior to each use. Maintain recommended fluid levels and examine the ATV for signs of any leaks. For the drive train and chassis, check for wear, leaks and loose parts. Parts should be replaced, tightened and lubricated as necessary.

“Driving an ATV isn’t like driving a car,” Moore says. “Turning, braking and operating on various terrains are all different on an ATV. Operators need to know how to shift their bodyweight when turning and how to evenly apply brakes. If tires are low or some part isn’t working properly, things can quickly go wrong. These vehicles aren’t nearly as stable as a pickup or car. You can roll one even at 15mph.

“Feedyard traffic plans should include blind spot training and ATV operation,” Moore says. “Raising awareness of and explaining how to recognize these hidden hazards can make the workplace much safer for everyone.”

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