

Playing helps children develop

Playing is an important means for children to develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually

- **Fantasy play** – an intellectual exercise that helps a child’s mind stretch, bend and change the real world into another world
- **Balance play** – develops body movement and control, helping children improve coordination and concentration
- **Ball play** – allows for development of hand-eye coordination, muscle development and fosters cooperative play where children must take turns or be part of a team
- **Climbing play** – develops and strengthens leg and arm muscles while helping to promote physical coordination, manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination
- **Manipulative play** – enhances fine muscle coordination, hand-eye coordination and concentration
- **Riding play** – skates, bicycles, scooters and other forms of riding play develop balance and strengthen the heart, lungs and lower body muscles and bones



Choosing the safe play area site

A safe play area is a carefully planned location with limited exposure to agricultural hazards

The farm play area location should be:

- Designated by boundaries or physical barriers such as fences or shrubs
- Away from car, truck or machinery traffic
- Away from stored or idle machinery and unstable hazards (tractor tire or gate leaning against a building)
- Free from open water or setting water (children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water)
- Within sight and sound of a responsible adult
- Maintained by cutting grass, replacing ground surfacing, checking play equipment for deterioration
- Continually evaluated by thinking “SAFE”
 - S** Supervision Provided
 - A** Age Appropriate
 - F** Fall Surface Suitable
 - E** Equipment and Surface Maintenance



Supervising children at play

Good adult supervision involves careful, attentive monitoring of a child at play

Children 2 to 6 years should always be within sight and sound of an adult during play. Because they are slowly developing their muscles and balance and are learning about spatial relationships and problem solving, this age group is most vulnerable to agricultural injury. Children this age depend entirely on adults to provide them with appropriate, safe opportunities.

Children 7 to 9 years have increased mobility and require larger spaces for play. Adults should check on children every 15 minutes during play.

Children 10 years can be left to play out of sight and sound of an adult for up to 30 minutes, depending on play activities. Children this age are very mobile. They begin seeking new play experiences that are more complex and may pose greater risk for harm. These children do not fully understand hazards or potential consequences of hazards.



Recognizing farm health hazards

Play areas should be located with as much protection as possible from common agricultural environmental hazards

Organic Dusts

- Severe respiratory problems can result from exposures to unhealthy amounts of organic dusts
- Hair, bedding, grain, silage, and dried urine and feces, can become airborne and easily inhaled
- Areas where organic dusts are prevalent include animal confinement facilities, grain bins and hay lofts

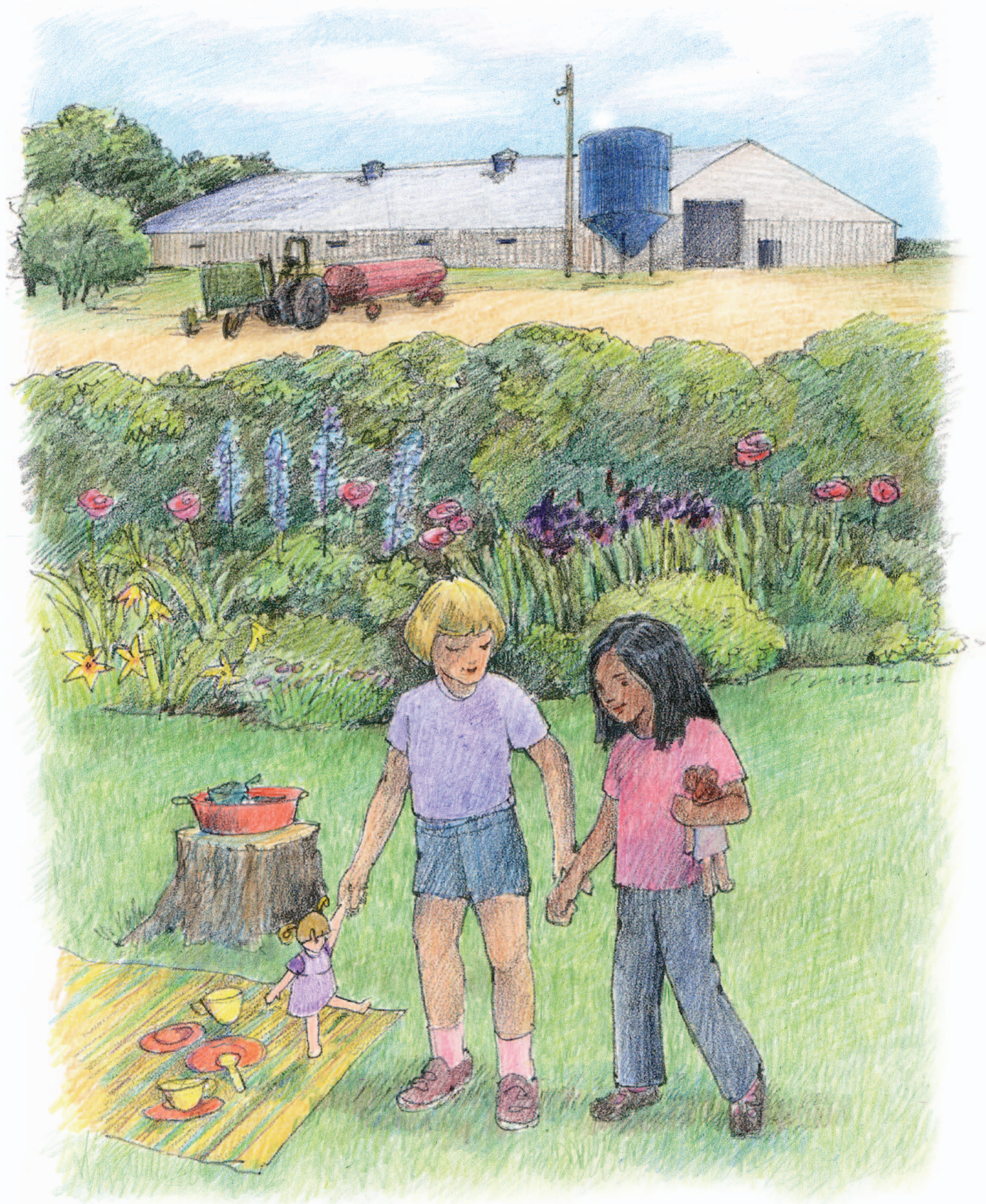
Common Pathogens

- Areas harboring pathogens include places where livestock and poultry manure is present or where livestock congregate
- *Cryptosporidium parvum*, *Salmonella* species, *Campylobacter jejuni* and *E. coli* O157:H7 are pathogens found on farms

- Children should always perform good hand washing following outdoor play on a farm.

Loud Noises

- Tractors, grinders, conveyors, compressors, grain dryers, chain saws and squealing sows are common sources of loud noise on a farm
- Farm workers experience some of the highest rates of noise-induced hearing loss because of repeated noise exposure that begins in childhood
- Protection from factors contributing to hearing loss (e.g. decibel level and the length of exposure to noise) should begin at birth



Preventing play-related injuries

Conduct routine checks for common hazards in the play area and ensure appropriate ground surfacing

Inspect play equipment for these hazards:

- Bolts and other protrusions can cause clothing to get entangled or skin to be punctured
- Pinch, crush, shearing, and sharp edge hazards can cut skin or crush a body part
- Metal or wood fragments should be removed to minimize risk of slivers
- Missing parts, such as ladder rungs or anchoring bolts create unnecessary risks to children

Ensure appropriate ground surfacing beneath play equipment:

- Minimize fall-related injuries from play equipment heights by placing protective ground surfacing under play equipment where children may fall
- Loose-fill such as sand, pea gravel, wood chips or wood mulch maintained at an appropriate depth can reduce serious fall-related play injuries
- Asphalt, concrete, dirt and grass do not provide appropriate cushioning under play equipment



Providing boundaries for play

Sturdy fences and latches and designated play boundaries are important components to safe play areas

- Fence height should be sufficient to keep children inside while keeping hazards outside
- Fence slats should be spaced less than 3 1/2" or more than 9" to avoid head entrapment
- Fence slats should be vertical instead of horizontal to deter children from climbing over the fence
- Chain link fences are a good choice, offering stability and safe openings
- Barbed wire, smooth wire and woven wire (e.g. chicken wire) fencing should be avoided
- Hedge and shrub rows should be thick enough to achieve the desired boundaries

