

## Ag Bikes

The term 'ag bike' refers to all motorbikes with two, three and four wheels, used for farm work. Three and four wheelers are also known as 'all terrain vehicles' or ATVs.

### Spot the hazard

Most ag bike injuries result from lack of training and experience, speed, uneven or unfamiliar terrain, humps, logs, rocks, embankments, carrying a passenger or an unbalanced load, inadequate protective clothing and unsafe driving. Those aged between 10 and 24 have a significantly higher risk of injury on ATVs.

### Assess the risk

Ag bike injuries are predominantly to legs, followed by injuries to spine, arms and head. Three and four wheeler spills often result in the rider being pinned beneath or rolled on by the vehicle. Assess all use of ag bikes for likelihood and possible severity of injuries. Develop safe use procedures to match the risk.

### Make the changes

The following suggestions will help minimize risks.

- Never ride an ag bike without an approved helmet.
- Long sleeves and pants, sturdy boots and gloves all provide protection if you come off the vehicle.
- Eye protection prevents serious eye injuries from bugs, branches or stones.

### Maintenance

- Check your bike before riding it.
- Pay attention to maintenance advice in the vehicle manual.
- Check brakes and tires regularly.
- Ensure all parts are genuine or are at least equivalent components designed for use on your particular brand of bike.

### Attachments

- Take extra care when using attachments such as spray tanks and other equipment on your ATV, as they can change the vehicle's centre of gravity and affect its stability.
- Ensure any attachments are designed for use on your ATV.

### Terrain

- Be on the lookout for potential hazards when riding. Rocks, bumps, irrigation pipes and wildlife all have the potential to cause an accident, and should be approached with caution.
- Take extra care when operating a bike on unfamiliar or rough terrain.
- Where possible, use familiar farm tracks.
- Be particularly careful when turning, approaching a rise or navigating an obstacle. If you are not sure of your ability to clear an obstacle, find another route or go back.

### Paved surfaces and public roads

- Don't drive ATVs on paved or bitumen surfaces. They are not intended for use on smooth surfaces and could be difficult to control.
- Never ride ATVs on public roads. It may be difficult to avoid a collision if other vehicles are on the road.

### Passengers and children

- Passengers and ATVs don't mix. ATVs are designed to be controlled by the shifting of weight around the vehicle. A passenger limits the driver's ability to do this.
- Never allow children to operate an ATV without training and appropriate supervision.
- Children do not always have the weight, limb size, skill and judgment to control an ATV safely.

### **Stunts and speeding**

- Never attempt jumps, wheelies or other stunts on an ATV.
- Ride at an appropriate speed for the terrain, your experience and the visibility conditions.

### **Drugs, alcohol and fatigue**

- Never ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs. They may affect your balance, vision, judgment and concentration.
- Fatigue can also limit your ability to control an ATV safely. Operating an ATV is more physically demanding than driving a car. If you are travelling long distances, take frequent rest breaks.
- Ensure you are dressed comfortably and appropriately - uncomfortable clothing can make you tire more easily.

### **Know the manual**

- Be familiar with the capabilities of your machine.
- Read and understand the manual, particularly safety information.
- Know all warning labels on the machine.

### **Owner responsibility**

- As an ag bike owner you must fully understand the risks associated with ATVs and know the appropriate safety precautions to take. You must ensure anyone riding your ag bike has the necessary skills and understanding to operate it safely and responsibly.
- If you are an employer, you have a duty of care under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 to ensure that ag bikes including ATVs are safely maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, and that employees riding them are adequately trained and are wearing protective gear.