A Few More Minutes to Be Farm Safe
Worth the Investment

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Mariah was raised on an Alberta dairy farm and completed her B.A degree at TWU in 2017.

The thing about cows is that they are animals of habit. If you’re late for morning milking, the cows will be holtering at the holding area waiting for you. Even though the early call of the robot or tractor breakdown might shift a schedule, dairy farming is a 24/7 job, and often slips farmers into autopilot.

With added exhaustions of early morning shifts and changing seasons, there seems to be a steady feeling of urgency — like there’s always something more to do. As farmers prepare for the busy season and dust-off stored equipment, fellow farmers urge caution and awareness with machinery.

Don’t Cut Corners

Al Fadden, a fifth-generation dairy farmer in Abbotsford, began farming with his brothers when he was out of high school. Now retired, he considers himself, his brothers when he was out of high school. He chuckles thinking about his healing process, “I gained an appreciation for the little things like putting my own socks on.” While he says he’s more aware of risks and how to mitigate them, he’s shocked at how easy it is to fall back into old routines. He is appreciative of his wife and family who are more than willing to keep him in check when it comes to safety on the farm.

For Quentin, and for many farmers, it’s easy to distance yourself from farm injuries when they don’t happen close to home — it’s easy to think that ‘It won’t happen to me.’ His hope is that by opening the conversation, more people will acknowledge the reality of on-farm safety. His reminder to fellow farmers is that “You do have the time.”

Consistency and routine are important practices of a successful operation, but relying on habit alone can get you into dangerous situations. When the to-do list is 100 pages long, your brain might be a couple steps ahead, rushing to get through a task you’ve done more times than you can count. It only takes a few moments for a serious accident to happen, even for long-time experienced farmers. Rushing, tiredness, distraction, complacency are everyday risks in farming. Al, Rick, and Quentin’s stories offer reminders not to take daily tasks for granted. A job may take a few extra minutes the safer way, but that time is worth the investment.

Fully recovered from his accident, Quentin is happy to be back in the barn and enjoying activities with his family. (See page 25 of BCHN Fall 2020 issue.)

Rick shares his advice openly, “It’s easy to get complacent with your machines. I was tired when this happened, I make sure my employees are not as tired. Go through the equipment with new employees to make sure everyone is safety conscious.”

Take Your Time

Quentin Bruns, an organic dairy farmer in Mara, has been farming his family’s land with his wife, Daniela, since 1996. On June 4, 2020, a brush mower fell on Quentin and shattered his pelvis.

The hardest part of recovery was sitting on the sidelines while his wife, son, and hired hand worked tirelessly through the cropping season; frankly, “It feels like you’re adding to their work,” he says. He found it difficult to watch his family struggle, but is grateful for his support network that aided in his journey back to home – it’s easy to think that ‘It won’t happen to me.’ His hope is that by opening the conversation, more people will acknowledge the reality of on-farm safety. His reminder to fellow farmers is that “You do have the time.”

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The difficult road back from his injury made Rick more safety-focused on farm, especially ensuring staff aren’t at risk from over-tired conditions.

The accident in Abbotsford injured his shoulder and shattered his pelvis. Rick maintains that being on the farm reminds each other to keep going. Together, they were able to overcome their injuries. In the cropping season; frankly, “It feels like you’re adding to their work,” he says. He found it difficult to watch his family struggle, but is grateful for his support network that aided in his journey back to home – it’s easy to think that ‘It won’t happen to me.’ His hope is that by opening the conversation, more people will acknowledge the reality of on-farm safety. His reminder to fellow farmers is that “You do have the time.”

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