

LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

Farm Pond Safety

Many farms and ranches have at least one, if not half a dozen, ponds scattered around their property. Farm ponds are an important element of a farming operation. They can provide water for your livestock, act as flood control, provide fire protection and help with water conservation practices. Ponds can also serve as recreation for your family and friends on hot summer days. Whether you enjoy swimming, fishing or boating, ponds often provide a way to relax after a hard day's work. Unfortunately, a pond can also pose a huge danger to you and your family if you do not take proper precautions.

Farm ponds pose the obvious threat of drowning, but there is another danger that is many times forgotten or overlooked. Farm ponds can contain excessive amounts of waste, bacteria, pesticides or fertilizers, making them unsafe for humans and animals. Before you let an animal or human come in contact with a pond, you should have it tested by your county health department. Consider having your pond tested for dangerous pollutants every spring or if the water ever becomes cloudy, develops a foul smell or is overtaken by algae. When the water safety has been approved, it is safe to allow friends and family to enjoy the recreational aspects of the pond.

Child Safety around Ponds

One group at a higher risk of drowning around a pond is children, especially children under the age of 4. Some causes could be: playing too close to the edge of the water, losing their balance in the soft earth at the bank or wading into shallow water and falling into a deeper hole they did not know was there. Other factors that increase the danger for children are the lack of adult supervision, adults not understanding the true curiosity of children and adults overestimating a child's judgment about the danger of ponds.

Even if a child acknowledges that they understand a warning about the risk of a pond, that does not mean that they fully comprehend the danger. Sometimes, a verbal warning of caution from an adult is not enough to keep a child safe. Their short attention span and curiosity about such an attractive play area creates a great hazard for their safety. One way to help prevent a tragedy of a child drowning in a farm pond is to teach children to swim at the earliest age possible. This is not fail-safe prevention but can greatly reduce the danger of drowning.

Adult Pond Safety

Even though children are in the most danger around a pond, adults are not immune to similar dangers. Even the most experienced swimmers can get into trouble if they develop leg cramps or are unaware of a sharp drop off in a pond. These, among other dangers, are why you should never swim alone, even if you are a very experienced swimmer.

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Before anyone is allowed to use the pond for recreational purposes, they should undergo water safety education. Consider being familiar with how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

General Safety Precautions

Depending on the location of your farm pond, and whether you also use it for recreation, you may want to consider additional safety precautions. Eliminate physical hazards associated with your pond. You may want to rope off parts of the pond that are unsafe, marking the spots that are sharp drop-offs and dragging the shallow areas for dangerous objects that could injure a swimmer.

Another important safety precaution that you could consider is the installation of a rescue post. The rescue post could be placed securely in the ground close to the water and painted yellow. A nylon rope that is long enough to reach across the length of the pond should be hung on the rescue post. Attached at one end of the rope should be a life preserver ring, with the other end fastened to a wooden block. A gallon plastic jug, with one pint of water in it, should also be attached to the rope to serve as a buoy. There should also be a 12 to 14 foot pole kept at the rescue pole to lend assistance to help someone that is in trouble.

Finally, the telephone numbers of emergency contacts and the location of the nearest telephone should also be posted on the rescue post. If someone gets into trouble, you should first try and use the pole. If that does not work, then try and use the life preserver.

Boating Safety

Depending on the size of your pond, boating is another possible recreational activity. There are some general boating safety tips that you should follow if you are going to take a boat out on the pond. First, make sure that the boat is in good condition and safe to be taken out on the water. Make sure that every person on the boat has a life preserver. Do not overload the boat with too many people, because even an excellent quality boat can sink. Finally, it is important to follow all water safety rules.

Farm ponds are a great way for your family and friends to spend time together. However, without proper safety precautions, that relaxing time can turn into a scary and tragic situation. By following these simple guidelines, you will be able to enjoy hours of recreation and fun with friends and family at your farm pond.



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