



## Safe Use of Two-Wheeled Farm Bikes in Agriculture

### Assessment of a Person's Skill Level to Operate a Farm Bike

One of the best methods to assess a person's skill level to operate a farm bike is to spend time discussing aspects of safe farm bike operation from your experience and getting the operator to demonstrate their skill while under your direct supervision.

When first learning to ride a farm bike, it is advisable to select an area of flat ground free of obstacles and hazards. After ensuring that the operator is familiar with the controls, initial riding should involve the use of low gears only, taking time to get used to the controls, in particular the throttle and brakes. Gear changes need to be practised so that changes are made smoothly because, under difficult conditions, an ability to change gears quickly and smoothly and correct gear selection, are very important.

Familiarisation with the bike should include: the bike's components; controls; gears; start and stop procedures; layout and function of controls. Identify hazards such as speed; obstacles; surfaces; slopes; undulations and ruts as well as routes to be taken, terrain peculiarities and alternative routes that can be used in bad weather conditions. Use this time to familiarise the operator with your property.

- Follow the instructions in the operator's manual.
- Find out how the controls work and how to stop in an emergency.
- Seek good advice and instruction, preferably from a qualified instructor.

### Farm Bike Limitations

Two-wheel farm bikes have few if any limitations around farms.

The following are a few tips to improve your riding technique.

#### While riding:

- Smooth clutch operation, gear changing and braking are keys to skilled riding.
- Place feet firmly on footrests when moving. Only put feet down as you come to a stop.
- Keep elbows away from body for additional strength and keep arms bent to act as shock absorbers.
- Press knees against the petrol tank to help balance the bike.
- Keep feet horizontal on footrests with toes pointed straight to avoid impact with ground objects.
- Use controls smoothly and avoid sudden braking or steering movements.
- Practise active riding. Moving your body weight around to control the bike improves balance and rider skill.
- Dress appropriately for the conditions. This may include overalls, strong footwear and head and eye protection.

### Implements and Their Effect on Vehicle Handling

#### Loads

- Don't exceed the load-carrying capacity of the carrier: follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Don't carry tools or electric fence gear across your knees.
- Make allowances for the extra weight and width of a load and ensure it is secured properly.

## Environmental Conditions

### *Slippery Ground*

- Ride smoothly, avoid hard braking or acceleration. A steady open throttle in a higher gear keeps the bike in more control.
- Make turns as wide as possible to maintain momentum.
- Always keep your feet on the footrests for maximum balance, traction and control.
- When cornering on slippery ground, keep your body upright and let the bike lean into the corner to keep weight directly on the tyres for traction.

## Terrain

### *Rough Ground*

- Standing with your knees slightly bent and balancing on the footrests improves all aspects of bike riding, especially visibility and traction.
- When cornering or riding along a hillside, lean the bike towards the slope and press hard on the outside footrest to keep weight on top of the tyre thread for better traction.

### *Riding Uphill*

- Pick the best line on the terrain.
- Select the appropriate gear.
- Stand on foot pegs rather than staying seated to get better balance and traction.
- If you must stop during a climb, put down the left foot, pull in the clutch and apply the rear brake.
- Operate the throttle smoothly, avoiding sudden acceleration which may make the bike rear up or flip over.

### *Riding Downhill*

- Engage second or third gear first, so the rear wheel will not lock causing a slide.
- Stand on footrests and move body weight backwards for better braking.
- Apply enough front brake to hold the bike at a constant safe speed, and back brake to prevent rear wheel moving out of line.

## Vehicle Maintenance

- Carry out the manufacturer's recommended maintenance as stated in the operator's manual.
- Wash the farm bike regularly.
- Ensure controls, especially brakes, are checked and adjusted regularly.
- Ensure foot pegs do not bend, sag, or lose their grip.
- After riding through water, check brakes.

## Farm Bike Passengers

- The pillion passenger should hold on to the rider's waist and sit close to the rider.
- The pillion passenger should lean with the rider when cornering to maintain balance.
- The rider should allow for the extra weight of the pillion passenger, i.e. stopping distances will increase due to extra weight.
- Ensure there are proper pillion passenger footrests attached to the bike and they are in good condition.

## Age of Rider

Children often lack the judgement, skills and strength to safely operate a full-sized farm bike. Manufacturers make smaller models suitable for youngsters but the same riding techniques still apply under adult supervision. Physical size and strength of the rider and the size of the motorbike are factors to consider.

## Have You Assessed the Critical Factors for Farm Bikes on the *Critical Factors Chart*?

- Assessment of skill level of operator
- Vehicle limitations given task
- Implements and their effect on vehicle
- Environmental conditions
- Terrain
- Vehicle maintenance
- Farm bike passenger
- Age of rider.

## References

Further information is contained in:

- Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
- *Guidelines for the Provision of Safety, Health and Accommodation in Agriculture*, available from OSH.
- *Farm Health and Safety Manual*, available from Federated Farmers.
- *Farm Bike Skills*, available from ACC.
- Operator's manual provided by the motorbike supplier.
- *Critical Factors Chart* available from OSH. (A guide for farmers to manage hazards in the workplace).