

Q CASE STUDY

“ If the spike had impaled me elsewhere on my body, it could well have been a very different story”

ACCIDENTS involving livestock on Scotland's farms and crofts are one of the highest causes of death or serious injury, according to official figures.

Graham Burnett of Aldie Farm, Tain, knows this all too well after he was impaled on a fork of a loader causing a seven-inch deep wound and four-inch gash on his buttock.

Graham farms 300 acres and runs 100 cows with wife Paula, and youngest son Ewan. Last year, the 57-year-old, who also works part-time as a lorry driver, was loading bulls onto a cattle float. A loader with a four-prong fork on the front was used to secure a fence to plug a gap and stop the bulls, which were 'pretty wild', escaping. However, the prongs, which had bales covering two of the four, were placed at an angle in the air, as opposed to flat against the fence.

Graham remembers at the time thinking about the risk involved with the prongs being in the air and two being uncovered, but that he wouldn't be near there so it shouldn't be a problem. When he went to get a feed bucket from his float, the bulls knocked the lorry door causing Graham to lose his balance. As a result, he fell off the float, impaling himself on one of the exposed spikes.

“Against all of the recommendations of staying on the spike until help arrived, I was on

my tip toes and managed to get myself off it,” explains Graham. “On hindsight this probably made the injury worse. There was a seven-inch deep hole, and a four-inch gash in my buttock – I could fit my fist in it.

“I was taken by ambulance to Raigmore Hospital in Inverness around 8.30am and had to wait until 4pm to have surgery. I was discharged the next day but had to attend the doctors daily for six weeks to get the dressing replaced. I was off work for six weeks, missing harvest, and having to draft in help to cover for me. I then had a phased return to work as I still struggled to sit.”

Graham does say that on his home farm, he is safety conscious. This accident happened while on another farm, and he says he felt it wasn't his place to tell the farmer how to do the job, however wouldn't hesitate to voice his concerns in future.

“It was an accident waiting to happen,” says Graham, whose father was a past president of NFU Scotland. “If the spike had impaled me elsewhere on my body, it could well have been a very different story.”

Graham, who is an NFU Mutual customer, says that he was very thankful to Murray White and the team at the local office for helping him after the accident. ♦



Farmer wellbeing

A new pocket-sized book offering advice and help on mental health for those within the agricultural community has been published.

Recent research from leading farming charity the Farm Safety Foundation revealed that four out of five young farmers (under 40) believe that mental health is the biggest hidden problem facing farmers today. In 2018, the charity launched the Mind Your Head campaign to raise awareness of this growing issue in the industry and build a community of support.

The Farm Safety Foundation recently launched *The Little Book of Minding Your Head* at its Resilient Farmers' Conference.

Stephanie Berkeley, Manager of the Farm Safety Foundation, says: “There is a wealth of information on general mental health issues but there seems to be very little dealing with the unique stressors facing the farming industry.

“We've produced this pocket-sized publication to offer clear explanations of what mental health is, how mental ill health is impacting on the industry, what this looks like and what this sounds like. It also outlines stress and ways to manage stress levels as well as covering depression and suicidal thoughts and how to deal with them. There is a section on how to start a conversation about mental health and the various sources of support for those wanting to know more about the issue and how it affects people.”