



SAFETY ALERT

Impact of tractor loads on stability

WHAT HAPPENED?

This safety alert is being sent out to advise of an incident where an employee was driving a tractor with a hay feeder attached when it rolled at the bottom of a slope. The employee was wearing his seat belt and escaped unharmed.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

The employee was driving a tractor with a hay feeder down a moderate slope, with the front-end loader raised to midway. His intention was to feed out the hay on the flat area at the bottom of the slope, as other flat areas in the paddock had been used before and have been cut up over several days by cattle hooves.

As he descended off high ground, he realised the conditions were slippery, as ground was still partially frozen. He was initially able to hold the tractor and bale feeder on course. However, the left rear wheel of the bale feeder hit a rock, altering the alignment of the bale feeder and causing the tractor to lose traction as the bale feeder jack knifed, and tipped onto its left side.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

- When front end loaders are carried in the raised position the centre of gravity for the tractor is altered. Operators should minimise this practice. Loads and implements (front and back) should be carried as low as possible to retain the best possible weight distribution
- If a load is raised when going through a gate to aid visibility, lower when travelling again
- Know what effect a load has on the handling. A rear-mounted load, in particular, will make the steering lighter; a raised centrifugal force makes it easier for a tractor to turn over sideways
- Adjust rear wheels to the widest setting that is suitable for the work
- Add recommended wheel ballast and rear weight for stability
- Choose the right gear before going down the slope. When going downhill, too high a gear will give insufficient engine braking, while a gear that is too low will increase the risk of wheel sliding
- Take extra care when operating vehicles in wet or icy conditions, especially on slopes
- Route Selection - Plan to feed out on flat areas in the first instance
- Wear your seat belt and always use safety devices where fitted: Staying in the driving position during a loss of control event may prevent serious injury or death from being thrown from or under a vehicle

TO AVOID SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH BY ROLLOVERS:

1. Fasten your seatbelt at all times
2. Adjust rear wheels to the widest setting that is suitable for the work
3. Add recommended wheel ballast and rear weight for stability
4. DO NOT drive on steep slopes or unstable surfaces
5. Carry loader arms at low position during transport
6. Move and turn tractor at slow speeds



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CONVERSATIONS WORTH HAVING:



Could this happen on our farm?



What part of the farm is safest for feeding out?



Is tractor rollover a risk on our farm? When and why?



Are there any similar risks to consider on our farm?

SAFE FARMING STARTS HERE:

farmwithoutoharm.org.nz/safety-alerts