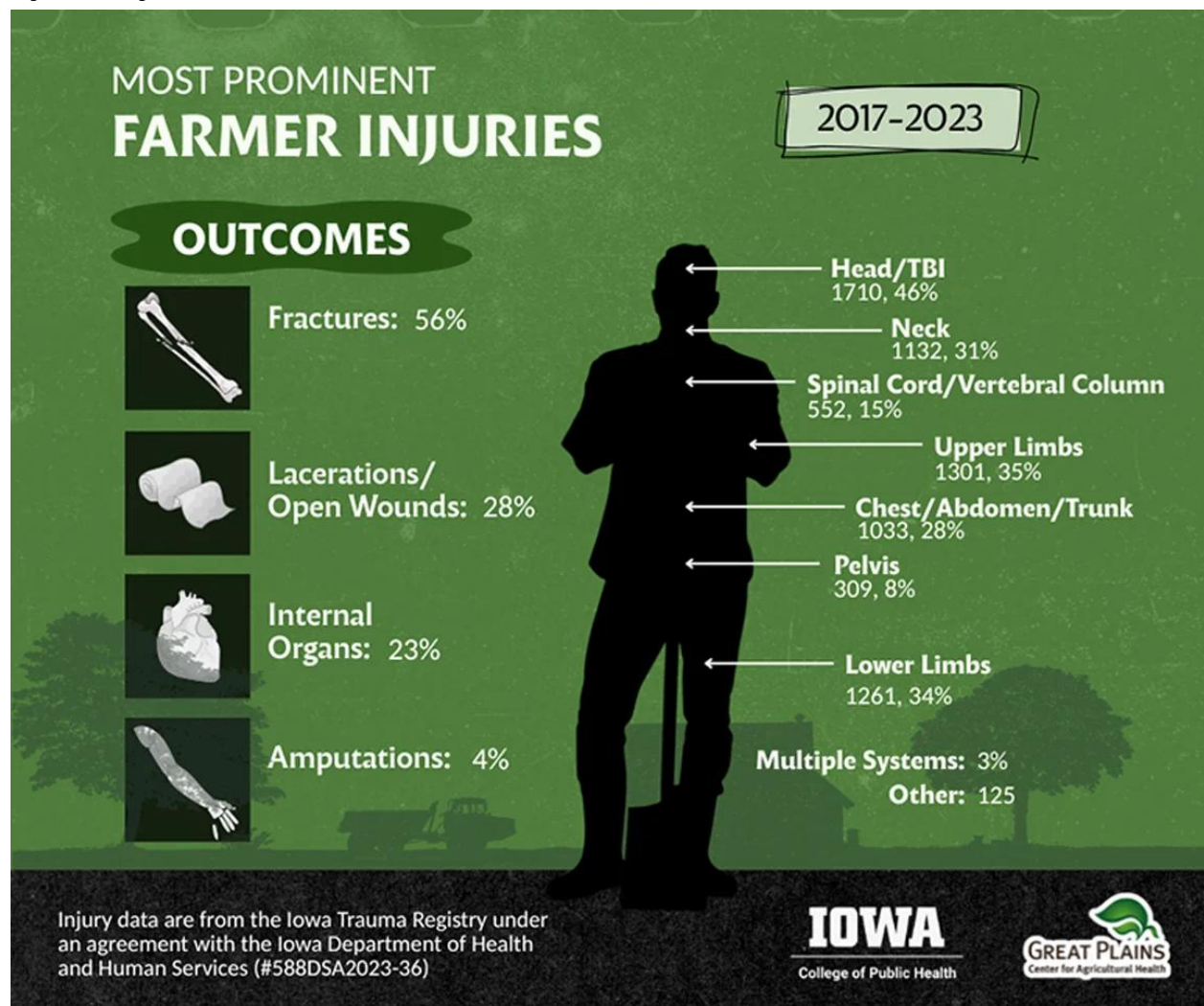


# What common injuries bring farmers to the hospital?

By Mandy Archer

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Every five years, researchers at the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health perform a deep dive into the Trauma Registry on farm-related injuries.

Graphic courtesy of Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health

**S**ometimes an injury lands you in the emergency room. Other times, maybe it should have.

In most states, when an injury is serious enough to make you go to the ER, your case gets entered into the trauma registry. We can examine information that is coded in the system to look at trends about how people are getting hurt.

Here in Iowa, since agriculture is such a huge part of our economy, our registry collects information on whether the injury is “farm-related” or not.

About every five years, we have researchers at the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health perform a deep dive into this system so we can identify what is hurting Iowa farmers.

We analyze data collected over multiple years to look for trends in where severe injuries are happening to share information back to farmers on risks you and your neighbors are facing.

Why? Because the more we know, the easier it is to make improvements that target what is really hurting us at work.

Late last year, we finished looking at this emergency room data across 2017 through 2023 and have some interesting trends to talk about. Over these seven years, we saw 3,753 people seeking help in the ER because of farming injuries. That’s 537 ER trips per year in Iowa, just from farming.

We can also see what body part is most effected when people sought emergency care from a farming injury. About 46% of cases had injury

to head or brain (TBI). About 35% of the time, injuries occurred to the upper limbs (hands/arms) and 34% the lower limbs (feet/legs).

The registry includes information on what caused the injury and what the outcome was — fracture, crushing, amputation or superficial injury.

What hazards on the farm are most likely to send a farmer to the ER? In 2017-23, falls led the way (25.2%), but getting injured by equipment (25%) or from operating vehicles (tractors, ATVs, even animals) (24.1%) were almost as important.

We can also look into “natural” causes, particularly animal-related injuries. While Iowa is No. 1 in pig production, injuries associated with cows far exceed that of other animals (58 ER trips per year, on average).

Most of the time, Iowa farmers are seeking treatment for fractures — 55.7% of the overall injuries are broken bones, with about 28% of farmer ER visits for getting open wounds taken care of.

The data let us know that if a farmer comes in with a fracture, about half the time there is also another injury diagnosis — ouch!

Most falls resulted in fractures — 71.2% of those with fall injuries seeking treatment had broken bones. We also see that for those seeking medical care after a fall, you have the highest chance of needing rehabilitation or long-term care (6.6% of cases compared to transportation injuries at only 3.2%).

The type of fall that most people think about — falls from one level to a lower level — was the most common fall type at 29%, but another 27% of falls happened when someone was on the same level, meaning someone tripping over something in the way.

About 40% of our Iowa farmer fall cases had serious consequences, or high injury severity scores.

Nationally, we are concerned about the risk of falls to older adults as the outcomes tend to be more severe than when someone younger falls. This problem extends from beyond the homestead to the farmstead for our older farmers. We can see from farmer injury data that farmers who are over the age of 55 are twice as likely to visit the ER for a fall than younger farmers.

The count of emergency room treatments needed for farmers who fall steadily increases with age, which is the only age-related injury trend we saw.

It is unclear whether surrounding states in the Midwest region have similar injuries. Jon Davis, the researcher and assistant professor behind this seven-year analysis of injury trends, said this data likely could reflect injury statistics from similar operations in neighboring states.

Want to look for more trends of what is hurting farmers? View the full report at [tinyurl.com/yuc3twfk](https://tinyurl.com/yuc3twfk) or listen to Jon talk about the Iowa farmer injury trends on our FarmSafe podcast at [tinyurl.com/2s3k7dcs](https://tinyurl.com/2s3k7dcs).

These links also direct you to posters and handouts that highlight interesting trends from this analysis that could help you have the conversation about safety on your farm.

We all know that farming is a dangerous occupation. Arming yourself with this information could help change your approach to a task just in time to prevent a fall or prevent becoming injured on the farm.

Severe cases can impact your ability to farm, so reach out to your friends and family and look at the report to see if you have had any injuries or near misses like the ones that sent your fellow farmers to the emergency room. Then, talk about what you could do differently the next time.

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*Mandy Archer is the outreach specialist for the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health at the University of Iowa College of Public Health.*

