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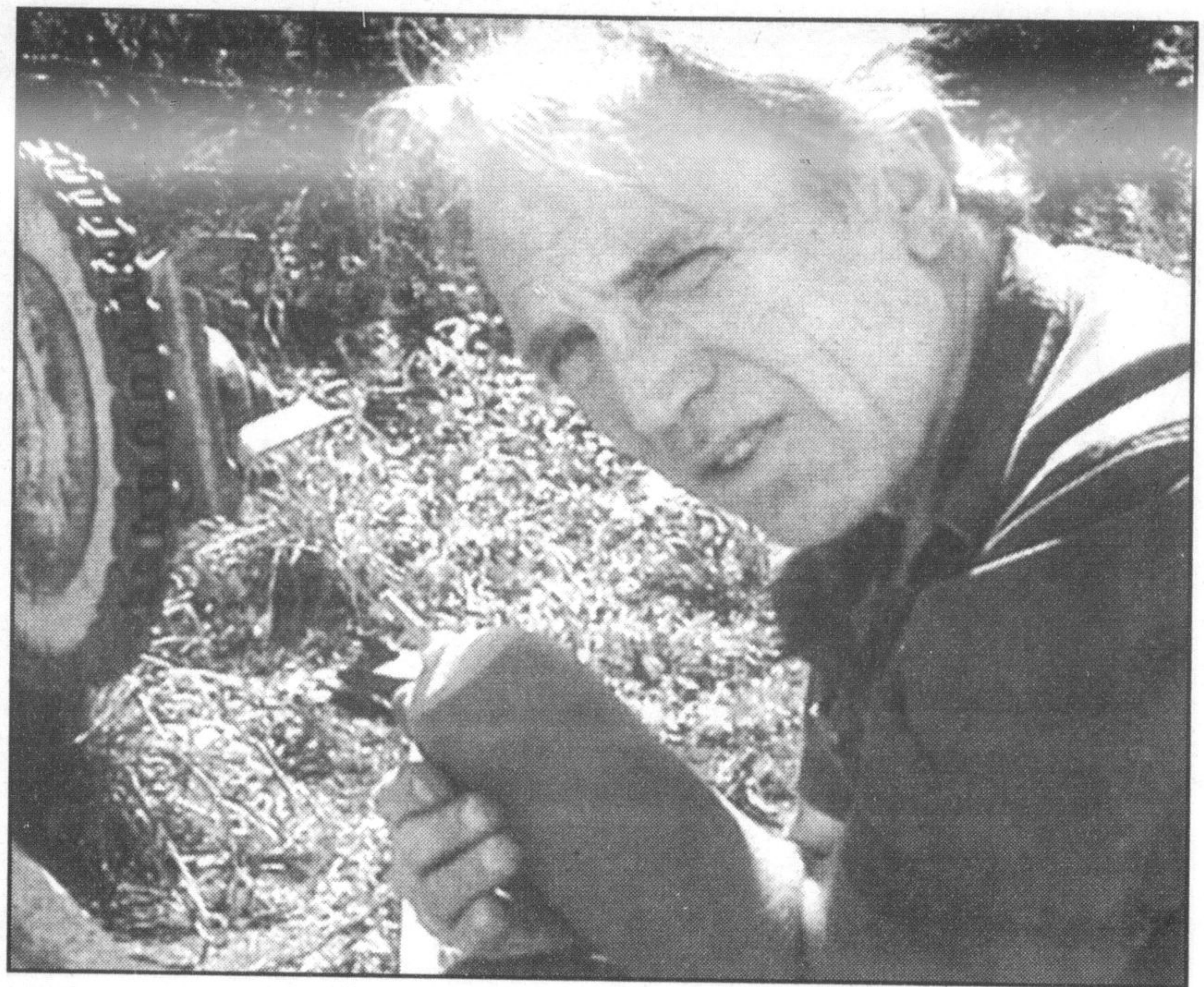
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Bruce Osiowy lost his hand in a farming accident.

Practicing safe farming can reduce costs — pain and suffering, monetary

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**
Special to The Champion

Every year, approximately 115 people are killed and 1,500 are seriously injured in farm accidents in Canada. The statistics are staggering.

This week, March 10 to 17, is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. This year's theme, 'Farm Safety Makes Sense', centres around the cost of farm-related incidents, both monetary and the less tangible costs of pain and suffering. Farming safely can greatly reduce the costs but it's a task everyone must be committed to.

Many studies have been completed on farm-related accidents and several key factors continue to reappear. Three-fifths of the 346,000 farms in Canada are run by a single operator and just over half of farm incidents happen while the victim is alone, according to the Census of Agriculture (2001).

As well, most accidents are caused by unsafe use of equipment and materials and occur during the peak harvesting months of September to November when farmers are exhausted from working late hours.

Another fact to note is that 20 per cent of farm fatalities are children under the age of 15 and aren't performing work duties, they're just in the workplace.

"Economic conditions play a role as well," said Steve Zronik, spokesman for the Farm Safety Association Inc. (Ont.) in Guelph. "Farmers may not replace older equipment and may make do with what they have. It can lead to a potentially dangerous situation."

Bruce Osiowy, from Abernathy, Saskatchewan, is one of the very fortunate farmers to survive a farm accident while working alone, although he lost his left hand in the ordeal.

Mr. Osiowy was attempting to repair a stonepicker when his wrench slipped pinning two fingers inside the machine. With no food or water, he survived for 66 hours and knew he needed to do something to save his life. Using a pocketknife, Mr. Osiowy cut the two fingers off and drove himself home to get help. Once in hospital, he needed to have his entire hand amputated.

Accidents like these have a costly impact on the farmers, their families, their livelihoods, insurance costs, and other personal

and business-related factors.

"The total cost to the Canadian economy for agricultural injuries is estimated at between \$200 and \$300 million annually," stated a 12-year study conducted by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program.

On a positive note, farm accidents are decreasing.

"In the last decade, farm-related incidents have definitely decreased," said Mr. Zronik. "Fatalities are down as well. This is likely attributed to the use of better equipment and more education."


Many things can be done to help reduce the number of farm-related incidents and fatalities and thereby reduce the costs associated with them.

"Keep children out of the workplace, keep the equipment and buildings in good condition, and training is very important," said Mr. Zronik. "New workers are hired, the hazards are not pointed out to them, they are not properly trained and, before you know it, an accident occurs."

A great deal of useful information is available on farm safety on the Internet. A few Web sites to visit are www.farmsafety.ca (Farm Safety Association Inc. Ont.) and www.agr.gc.ca (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada).

Common Types of Injuries from agricultural activities

| Men | Women |
|----------------|----------------|
| Fracture 16.9% | Fracture 16.7% |
| Cut 35.4% | Cut 28.3% |
| Strain 22.1% | Strain 31.7% |
| Burn 1.5% | Burn 1.7% |
| Crush 8.7% | Crush 15.0% |
| Other 15.4% | Other 6.6% |



Adapted from the Ontario Farm Family Health Study, 1992

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