



## **Farm Safety Tip – Skin Cancer**

### **HOW COMMON IS SKIN CANCER?**

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, with over 600,000 new cases and 9,000 deaths each year. The incidence among farmers is noticeably higher than in the general population, and it is increasing.

### **WHAT CAUSES SKIN CANCER?**

Sunburns, though a contributing factor, are not the main cause of skin cancer. It is the total amount of sun a person receives over the years that is the major contributor. UV rays reach you on cloudy and hazy days any time of the year, not just on sunny summer days. UV rays will also reflect off any surface like water, cement, sand, and snow.

### **WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF SKIN CANCER?**

There are three common types of skin cancer. Of the three, basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas are highly curable. The third, melanoma, is responsible for most of the deaths. But even melanoma is curable if detected and treated early enough.

### **WHO IS AT RISK?**

You are! Anyone exposed to sunlight is at risk, however people with the following characteristics have the highest risk:

- Family history of skin cancer
- Personal history of skin cancer (if you've already had it once, you're more likely to get it again)
- Fair skin
- Blond or red hair
- A history of sunburns early in life
- Blue or green eyes
- More than 100 moles on your body; 50 if you are under age 20

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST SKIN CANCER?**

#1 Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants, as well as a wide-brimmed hat that provides shade to the ears and back of the neck. Baseball caps provide almost no protection.

#2 Use sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection. Apply it 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours. Apply more often if you are sweating.

#3 Try to limit the amount of time spent in the sun from 10am to 4pm. Whenever possible, use machinery with cabs or shades that protect the operator.

#4 Wear wrap around sunglasses that block 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.

#5 Learn to recognize melanoma. See <http://www.cancerresearch.org/melanomabook.html> and <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/melanoma/page8> for a description of melanoma with photographs.

#### WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Here are some websites with more detailed information on skin cancer:

From the CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/chooseyourcover/qanda.htm>

From the National Cancer Institute: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/skin/> (make sure to click on “Next Section” link at the bottom of the introduction)

Here are two websites with photographs and descriptions of melanoma:

<http://www.cancerresearch.org/melanomabook.html> and  
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/melanoma/page8>