

# “UNSAFE TODAY” STATISTIC TOMORROW?

Neil Carter



**David and Shirlene Cochrane farming at Peel Forest**

## **Introduction**

We can't change what we don't acknowledge and accidents don't just happen!

There is always a combination of factors that lead up to an incident.

What we want to do today is look at an incident, ask what the contributing factors were, and how we could have reduced them to prevent the accident.

The reason ACC want you to have an accident register is to reflect, to say what happened here and how can I prevent myself from becoming one of tomorrow's statistic.

It's true we do learn by our mistakes, but we generally wait until the mistake is a big one.

We don't like change because it challenges our skill level, unfortunately when we wait for the big one, the cost is in most cases a high a price to pay, even fatal.

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Notes:

In spite of all the statistical data, things aren't changing, because it is the day to day process of how we do things that must change if we are going to bring down the number of injuries occurring.

The goal for today is to motivate us to change the way we do things on farm.

Not just the farm owner, the sharemilker or manager but all staff.

We all have a responsibility to change the culture on farm, but to get things moving we have to be setting a good example! Are you?

Today is not about blame, it's about learning as we listen to others share their story, and learning from their experiences.

Hopefully we want to give you guys some practical solutions on how to change things on farm and in the process, better the on farm culture.

## **Introducing Neil Carter**

Neil has a very relevant story to tell because we have all done what he has done at some stage or degree.

### ***What happened?***

It was the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2004 and just another busy day on the dairy farm.

I was employed by Mike King of Cloverdale Dairy Farm as an 'Operations Manager' to oversee 1800 cows and fattening 1000 Friesian bulls.

Unbeknown to my family and myself, that day was about to change our lives around.

My former wife Lyn, Selwyn our Bull Farm manager and I headed off to a farm about 6kms down the road to bring home the last of our calving cows. Lyn had the truck and trailer and Selwyn and I were on the 4 wheeler motorbikes.

One of the cows had calved, and on bringing them onto the road Selwyn radioed to me to come back and pick up the calf who was struggling to keep up. Lyn was ahead us warning oncoming traffic. I decided to carry the calf on my bike up to the trailer. So putting the calf across my lap, like I had done on numerous occasions before, carried on through the cows heading towards Lyn and the trailer.

On reaching the front of the mob I began to quickly zigzag across the front lot to slow the leaders down, before heading off to take the calf to the trailer.

### ***How did it happen?***

What happened next is a little vague. The calf was restless and uncomfortable across on my lap. With only one hand on the handlebar and one hand holding the calf I turn the bike back one way, suddenly the calf jumped forward onto my arm that was on the throttle, the force and the speed at which I was going caused the bike to flip over, tipping me off and roll over my head in the process.

I tried to get to my feet but failed. I felt myself going in and out of consciousness and was struggling to breathe.

Luckily for me Lyn had seen it happen and rushed back to me. Blood was coming out of my ears, nose and mouth, so she knew the situation didn't look good. I was taken to Ashburton Hospital, and from there I was helicoptered to Christchurch Hospital intensive care to be put in an induced coma for three days, followed by another 7 days in the neurological ward.

### ***Long road to recovery***

For several days the outcome was unknown with five fractures of the skull, broken ribs and brain bruising.

The days to come were very hard on Lyn and the kids who had to wait to see how well I would respond to treatment. With relief I was able to return home 10 days later. The next three months were the worst of days. I suffered severe depression and anxiety. Worrying about the financial and emotional strain it would cause our family. Would I return to any form of work? How were we going to cope on one wage? Would I be independent again and not have to rely on Lyn, or the kids, to help me with the most minor things. Some of the things that affected me were my lack of concentration and non ability to focus for long periods at a time, too frightened and uncoordinated to drive the car, constant tiredness from small amounts of physical activity and strong desire to sleep all the time, my apparent short temper and low tolerance.

### ***How could I have prevented it?***

I am very fortunate to still have my life, but there has been a lot of heartache along the way, all because of my lack of foresight and ignorance of the risks that I took that day.

If I had my chance to do it all over again, first and foremost I should of been wearing a helmet, especially when travelling on the road even though my speed wasn't that fast.

I now believe that helmets should be worn at all times, as annoying as they can be. I was one of the lucky ones and have lived to tell the tale, some haven't had that luxury.

Secondly, the calf should have been put straight into the trailer, there and then. I should never have had it on my lap while driving due to the unpredictable risks that could happen. One of my mistakes was being overconfident as an experienced bike rider.

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It probably took three years to find my feet again, and gain my confidence back, with three jobs coming and going, before finally settling down with my current job as a Technical Field Dairy Rep for PGG Wrightson – South Canterbury.

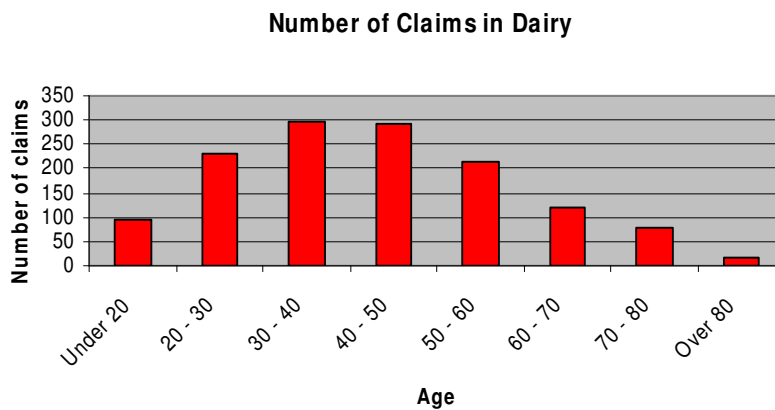
## Statistical data

Let's look at some statistical data.

**Table 1.** Summary of workplace deaths in NZ for the June years 2000-2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Agriculture	17	25	22	15	23	17	21	20
Forestry	7	2	7	9	1	7	5	2
Construction	8	12	14	6	5	14	13	9
Industrial/Commercial	7	29	29	30	16	26	15	22
Extractive Industries	0	5	1	2	1	1	1	0

What age group do you think are injuring themselves?



**Figure 1.** Age demographic dairy

We know inexperience gets us into trouble but forget our experience also gets us into trouble. We have done this job a thousand times before and got away with it.

Currently, on a NZ Farm

- 1 farmer is killed every 2-3 weeks
- 11 farmers are seriously injured every day

**Table 2.** Causes of injuries - dairy

<b>Injury Causing Factor</b>	<b>% of Claims</b>	<b>Dominant Injury</b>
<b>Injury by animals</b>	<b>21.8</b>	
<b>Vehicle injuries</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>ATV rollover</b>
<b>Lifting, strain</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>Lifting calves and feed</b>
<b>Unclear causes</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>Includes injury from noise and OOSC from milking routines</b>
<b>Slips, trips and falls</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>Mostly in and around dairy shed</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>89.4</b>	

### **What are we going to do to reduce injuries on our farm?**

Some of the things we now have in practice:

- Orientation Checklist
- Training needs analysis
- Induction system
- Policies
- Hazards register
- Accident register
- Maintenance day
- Fortnightly meetings
- It all sounds like compliance.
- But these are some of the benefits we get from that list.

#### ***Orientation checklist***

- Allows us to sit down with each staff member to talk about their role in our business.
- We are able to set a high standard as we talk about farm policies.
- The staff member feels included.

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### ***Training needs analysis***

- Provides proof we know what training our staff needed to do the job safely.
- Staff felt we cared about their career.
- Staff started asking themselves what else they could learn.
- Staff worked harder to achieve and become more efficient as their skills increased. IP-TP-BP

### ***Formal induction***

- Good introduction for our overseas students.
- Everyone follows the same process
- Less time checking up on staff
- Staff knew the way we wanted things done and why.

### ***Policies***

- These set standards in the workplace.
- Wearing helmets became part of our culture.
- Working at a slower pace because of speed limits.
- Staff think more clearly because they don't have mental stress of always rushing.
- People started thinking about how they presented themselves to us and in the industry.

### ***Hazard register and Plan***

- A must if your team are to understand what you want to achieve.
- Provides a list of hazards on farm to show we had identified them.
- Other businesses appreciate we are operating a top operation
- Staff and contractors report new hazards.

### ***Accident Register***

- We can prove we are looking at incidents.
- Can identify 'near hits' and suggest improvements
- We have "buy in" from our team. (Grubber on bike)
- Staff are looking out for each other.

### ***Maintenance Day***

- Keeps our gear in reasonable and safe working condition.
- Staff maintain the gear themselves, so they look after it better.
- They report damage and breakages ASAP.

### ***Meetings***

- Rule, everyone must share something.
- We became a “team,” everyone is equally important.
- Everyone looks forward to the sit down and catch up.
- As a team we decide what and how we will achieve the coming fortnight, so things are organised and less stressful for everyone.

We go to a lot of trouble to avoid the possibility of an accident.

All the things I have talked about and put in place on farm have been for health and safety reasons but for us it’s been good business.

All we’re asking you is to take another look?



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