

Youngsters in Agriculture Need to Protect Their Hearing, Too!

**By Crystal Chalmers, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
Owner, North State Audiological Services**

With agriculture being such a huge economic base here in the North State, it's no wonder that a number of farmers and ranchers are patients of mine. Hearing loss due to exposure to loud machines and vehicles is pretty commonplace amongst those in ag. In fact, it is estimated that 80% of all farmers in the United States have some hearing loss.

What is troubling is that many – too many -- of those farmers and ranchers are not the fifty-something or sixty-something year olds that one might expect. They are young people; some as young as grade school age!

How can that be? Simply that these young people get exposed to loud farm machinery at an early age. Couple that with the louder and louder environment that our society has become through use of devices like personal music systems and these youngsters in ag are getting the proverbial double whammy!

Below are some decibel (dB) levels for commonly used farm equipment. Keep in mind that 80dB is the level at which noise causes hearing loss.

Tractor ... 94 dB (outside)
Grain dryer ... 100 dB
Combine ... 86 dB (inside)
Chain saw ... 110 dB
Grain grinding ... 97 dB
Animal noises ... 102 dB
Truck engine ... 82 dB
ATV ... 93 dB
Gunshot ... 165 dB (peak)

Needless to say, the listing above proves that the farm can be a pretty loud work environment. The good news is that some Farm Bureaus in parts of the country have recognized the level of noise on the farm, are concerned about the next generation of farmers and ranchers, and are doing something about it. "Farm Safety Camps" are designed to make young farmers and ranchers aware of the damage loud noise can do to their hearing as well as teach hearing conservation practices.

Although in its initial stages the program has received good reviews in the communities it has appeared. Hopefully, more farm bureaus will take on the task of implementing this or a similar program in their communities. ... *because hearing is a wonderful gift!*

About the writer: Crystal Chalmers, Au.D., is an AudigyCertified™ Doctor of Audiology, the owner of North State Audiological Services in Chico, and a member of AudigyGroup, the nation's largest member-owned association of independent hearing care professionals.

Since 2006, AudigyGroup has interviewed over 5,000 of the 18,000 audiologists in the United States, yet has selected only 250 to be members in this elite association. AudigyCertified™ is a trade-mark of AudigyGroup, LLC.

To learn more about Dr. Chalmers, her practice, and AudigyGroup visit online at www.nsaudiology.com or call (888) 844-7024