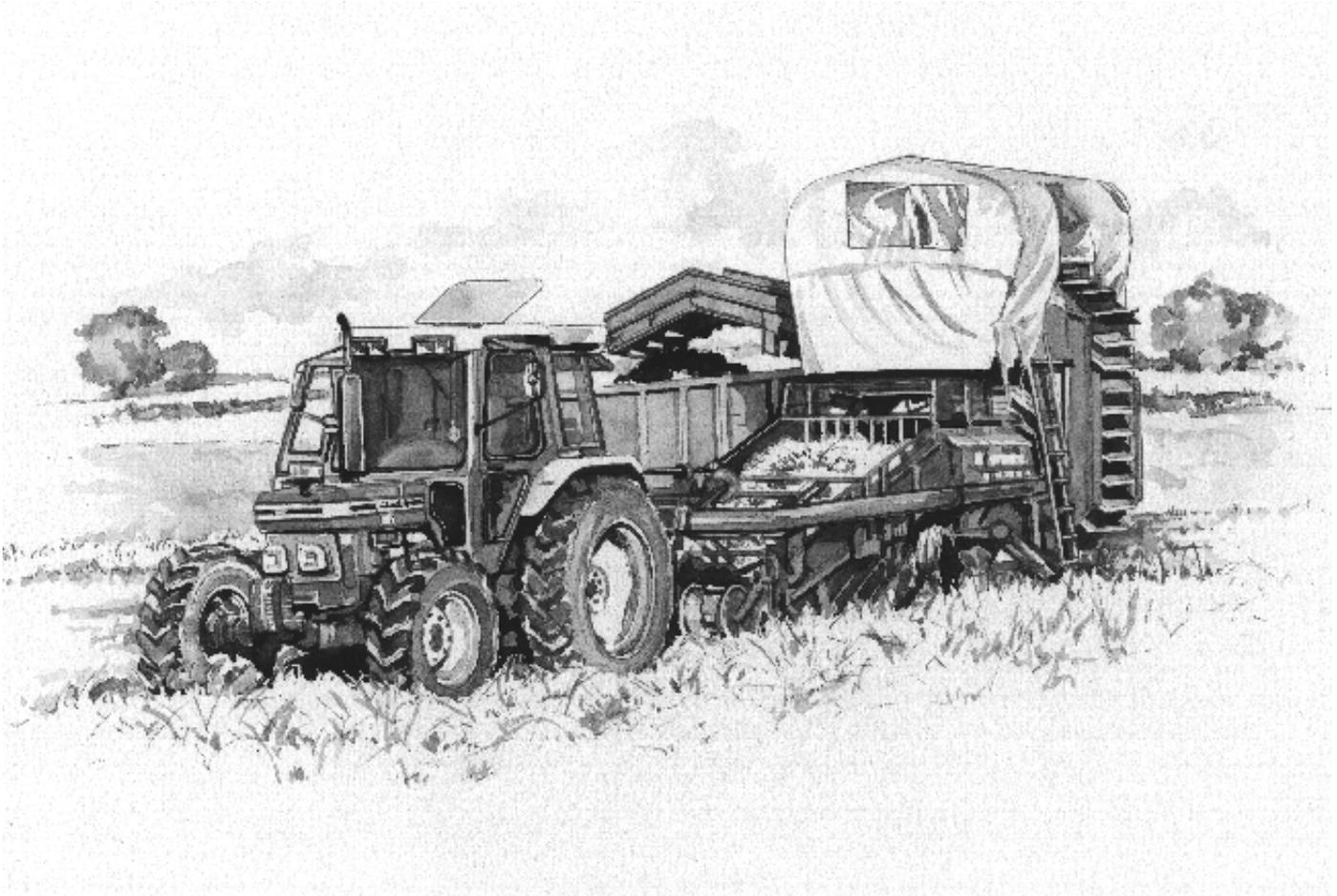




Safe use of potato harvesters

Agriculture Sheet No 13



Introduction

This information sheet outlines the key dangers common to most potato harvesters. It also lists essential Do's and Don'ts for the safe operation of these machines.

A study of accidents investigated by HSE showed that 11 people were killed and 121 seriously injured when working with potato harvesters between 1988 and 1996.

Five people died and seven were seriously injured when they were run over by potato harvesters.

Ninety-seven people injured arms or legs when caught in haulm or cleaning rollers. These accidents often caused amputations.

All users of potato harvesters need to identify the hazards caused by their harvesters and make sure all those working with these machines know and follow safe working practices to prevent accidents and serious injuries.

Key dangers

Injuries are caused by:

- getting caught in haulm and cleaning rollers;
- harvesters and tractors running over people;
- falling from access ladders and platforms;
- getting caught in conveyors or elevator chains;
- getting caught by the drive mechanisms;
- getting wrapped around the power take-off (PTO) shaft;
- failing to switch off **all** power sources;
- handling bags of potatoes;
- poor working positions causing back strains etc.

Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- make sure everyone working on the harvester has understood the safety instructions in the handbook;
- provide the operator with clear instructions on the safe way to clean the harvester of haulm, stones, potatoes etc;
- agree a system for communicating between the platform and the tractor driver, eg sound the horn before starting the engine, reversing or engaging drives;
- check that **all** haulm, clod and cleaning rollers are properly guarded. Fit additional guards if anyone can reach the rollers with arms or legs from any position. Manufacturers can help with guard kits;
- fit an alarm or stopping device on the platform;
- make sure you and any of your employees, relief drivers and contractors are properly trained in the safe use of the potato harvester and have read this sheet;
- remember that putting the PTO out of gear will not cut the power to some hydraulically driven components;
- take particular care when reversing; make sure you can see what is behind or seek assistance if the view is obscured;
- stop the tractor engine and pocket the ignition key before you carry out any work on the potato harvester;
- make sure all guards are in position and correctly fitted before starting work;
- **stop the engine before anyone clears a blockage;**
- **stop the tractor before anyone gets on or off the harvester.**

Don't:

- reach into the potato harvester unless all drives are stopped;
- climb over harvesters;
- jump on or off the harvester when it is moving;

- leave the driving position of a moving or running tractor;
- work under box handling attachments without using the supports provided;
- carry out maintenance with the tractor engine running;
- park or carry out maintenance when under or near overhead power lines;
- run the harvester with the guards raised or removed;
- allow children on or near the harvester.

General guidance

Take care when working in difficult conditions or those with weed or haulm problems - don't overload the machine. Remember that avoiding blockages is easier than clearing them. Use drive reversing mechanisms when fitted and encourage the use of conveyor controls to optimise picking conditions.

Make use of relevant training courses such as those run by Lantra, manufacturers and dealers. They will help to ensure the safe and efficient use of your potato harvester.

Further information

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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