

Disabling Dangers on the Farm with Insurance Options

Owner Injuries

Injuries to farm and ranch owners while at work are common. Accidents can happen with PTO tractor attachments, trailers that get unhitched, gates that malfunction on you, the list goes on. These dangers can lead to lost digits and limbs, which impacts the business and the farmer or rancher's future livelihood. A key question for owners to ask themselves is: **what kind of coverage do I have for work-related injuries right now?**

Checking Coverage

To answer this question, take a look to see if your individual health insurance policy *excludes* coverage for injuries from self-employment. This may be your own policy you purchased on the health insurance marketplace or a policy you have through your spouse's employer.

Tips for checking your policy:

- *If you have health insurance through your spouse's employer, ask them to ask their HR department for assistance.*
- *If you hold your own policy, see if they have a helpline to call for assistance.*
- *If neither of the above applies, get a copy of your health insurance policy and read it.*

Other Options

If you find that your health insurance policy doesn't exclude injuries from self-employment, that's great! However you may still have something to gain from getting additional coverage through **workers' compensation, disability insurance, and life insurance**. If you aren't covered for injuries from self-employment, then you certainly have more to gain through these other options.

Here's an overview of what these policies typically cover:

Workers' Compensation: Generally covers lost wages, transportation to doctor's appointments, prescriptions, medical bills, benefits for loss of digits and limbs and life (i.e. lifetime consequence of having lost the digit or limb).

Disability Insurance: Generally covers lost limbs, chronic illness, or other debilitating conditions that leave you less able to earn your income. It offers set

compensation for certain disabilities and time away from your work where you can't earn your income. You can select a higher value plan that will give you more for a longer period of time, based on specific disabilities. It's like private insurance and like anything, you can pay more to get more in benefits.

Life Insurance: Generally pays out the death benefit amount only when the insured passes away. While it does not offer financial protection should you experience injury resulting in long-term disability, in some cases, life insurance policies let you add riders — added extras that provide flexibility or benefits. For instance, if you add the disability income rider, your life insurance policy will pay you a portion of your income if you were to experience illness or injury resulting in disability. This typically comes at the cost of higher premiums.

Income Matters

It may be obvious, but it's worth reiterating that the incentive to get coverage for lost wages that result from injuries in the course of self-employment often involves showing income. You've got to show income in order to cover lost income. As you decide what works best for your needs and goals, keep in mind that underreporting income makes it harder to take advantage of any insurance that covers you for lost income, especially workers' compensation.

Moving Forward

Remember your options:

- Check whether your individual health insurance policy covers workplace injuries
- If not, consider whether workers' compensation coverage would be advantageous to cover lost wages (what you're reporting!) and to provide lifetime benefit for lost digits or limbs
- Consider disability insurance and life insurance with disability riders to further protect your ability to recover from a damaging accident
- Get safety training to foster a safer workplace environment

At the end of the day, managing the risks of farm and ranch owner injuries is a matter of assessing the risks to your farm and deciding if more protection is worth it to you.

