



Farm Pond Safety¹

Thomas L. Bean²

The farm pond has been an important economic unit in many farming programs. Ponds are used as part of a soil and water conservation program to water livestock, as an irrigation water source, and for fire protection and recreation, such as fishing, boating, swimming and ice skating.

Unfortunately, farm ponds contribute to accidental drownings. Children are the victims of the majority of farm pond drownings. Small children get too close to the water and lose their balance on the soft bank. Many wade in the cool shallow water only to fall into deep holes. Some drown for no apparent reason. Lack of close adult supervision contributes to pond drownings. Adults often overestimate a child's curiosity. A short attention span, coupled with the attractiveness of a farm pond as a play area may render most verbal instructions ineffective.

Adults, too, drown, in farm ponds. Most of these pond drownings occur while swimming. These are most often young active adults and visitors.

It is the farm operator's responsibility to see that his/her farm pond is as safe as possible. In most cases it is recommended that all ponds be fenced and posted to keep out unwanted persons. Liability may increase with non-posted, non-fenced ponds. Restrict entry to your pond to keep out uninvited guests.

Accidents can be prevented and lives saved by placing signs warning of specific dangers or indicating

safe areas for swimming. See Figure 1 for some examples of such signs.

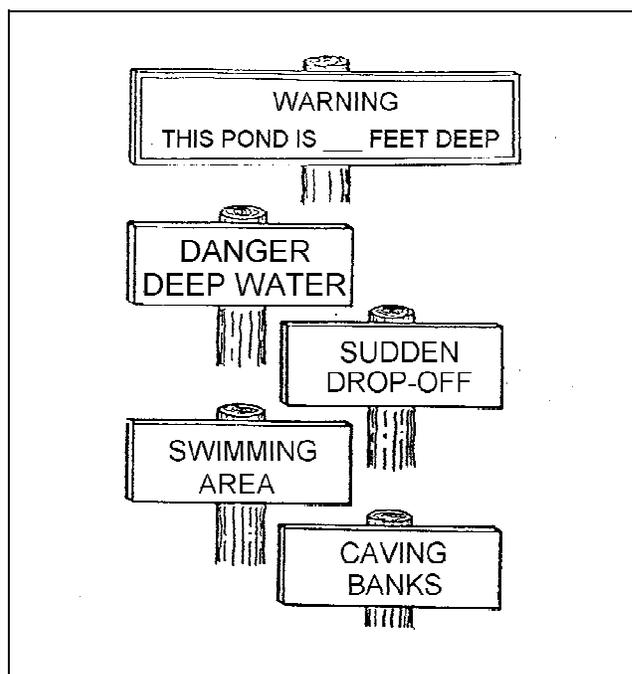


Figure 1. Examples of signs (with 1" dark letters on a white background) posted 4 feet above the ground surface

All farm ponds used for swimming should have a rescue post. It should be set firmly in the ground near the water. The post should be painted yellow. Attach a long shelf bracket, peg or nail to the post. Obtain enough nylon rope to reach across the pond. Attach a life buoy

1. This document is AEX-390, a series of the Agricultural Engineering Department, Ohio State University Extension, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Publication date: August 1991.
2. Thomas L. Bean, Safety Leader, Ohio State University Extension, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Reviewed by Dr. Karen Mancl and Dr. Andy Ward, Department of Agricultural Engineering, Ohio State University.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bobby D. Moser, Director of the Ohio State University Extension, The Ohio State University. All educational programs and activities conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to all potential clientele on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, age, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status.

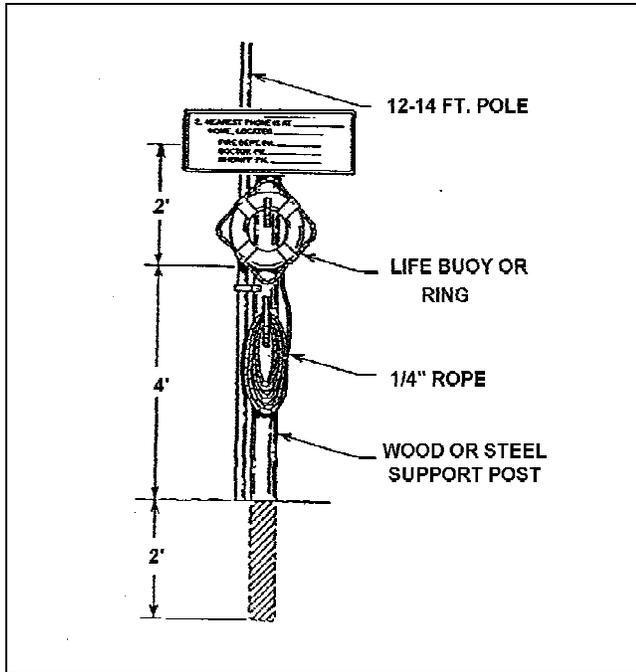


Figure 2. Rescue Post

or ring to one end of the rope and a wooden block to the other end. Hang this rescue device on the post. A thin, lightweight 12' to 14' pole should be attached to the rescue post to aid in rescue. Finally, attach the location of the nearest telephone and emergency numbers to the top of the post. Figure 2 gives an illustration of a rescue post.

It should be emphasized that all farm ponds may not be suitable for swimming. If the water is cloudy, has a foul odor or excess algae, it may contain infectious agents or be contaminated by fertilizers, pesticides or livestock wastes. Ponds used for swimming should be analyzed for bacteria during swimming season to determine water quality. Contact your county Extension office for publications AEX 314, *Water Testing* and AEX 315, *Where To Have Your Water Tested*.

MAKE YOUR FARM POND SAFE FOR SWIMMING

- **DO** teach children to swim.
- **DO** mark safe swimming areas with posts or floats.
- **DO** remove submerged rocks, stumps, broken bottles, and other hazards.
- **DO** keep simple rescue devices near your pond.
- **DO** post life saving warning signs.
- **DO** have your pond tested for contamination.
- **DON'T** swim alone or allow anyone to swim by themselves.
- **DON'T** let small children swim near a farm pond without adult supervision.