

## Be Aware of Agricultural Equipment on the Road

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

I recently spent a couple of days helping to teach 14 and 15 year old youth agricultural safety. Part of that training had to do with safely moving agricultural equipment on roadways between fields. While the youth did an excellent job of understanding their responsibility when on the roadway, I really would like to get a few thousand other people into this same class. This feeling is based on what I see out on the roadway and the horror stories I hear from farmers and ranchers.

We are in the middle of soybean planting and will very soon be starting wheat harvest. There will be a definite increase in the number of agricultural vehicles on the roadways throughout our region and the state. Safety on the roadway comes down to the drivers of those agricultural vehicles AND all of the rest of us out there sharing those roadways.

First and foremost, all of that equipment has the same right to be on those public roadways as you do in your vehicle. The only roads where farm equipment can not operate is on interstate highways. They have to follow the same regulations as you do. They have to maintain a lane of traffic and obey all stop signs and other traffic regulatory signs. They also have some additional requirements.

This equipment does not travel as fast as your car does. Tractors and most other ag equipment is going to have a top speed under 25 mph and will often be going no faster than 15 to 20 mph to maintain safe control. Assuming that you are traveling the speed limit on a highway of 65 (and I do realize that many of you do NOT) then you are approaching that tractor as if it were standing still and you were traveling 45 mph. You are closing the distance between you and that tractor at 66 feet per second. You will cover the length of a football field in 4.5 seconds. If you are traveling faster than 65, then your time to react becomes even less. The minute you see that agricultural equipment, you need to be slowing down! I'm sorry, but I see too many people driving like, well, like idiots out there on the highways and you just need to slow down especially around this equipment! Don't approach the vehicle and assume that you can fly around it without taking your cruise off. Just! Slow! Down!

If a tractor/equipment is traveling along a roadway and more than three vehicles stack up behind it, that equipment has to pull over and let the traffic pass, **WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO!** Following slow moving equipment does NOT give you the right to pass in a no passing zone. Just sit back there and wait. Most farmers I know are very courteous and when they get a chance to safely pull over, they will. But the law says that you have to wait to pass until it is safe to do so. If it is a marked no passing zone, it is not safe to pass and it is illegal!

For the next few weeks you just need to allow a little extra time for your travels. If you leave for work late and the only way you can be on time is to speed, it's not that farmer's fault you are late, it's yours. Slow down and just wait patiently. Getting mad and impatient isn't going to help. Causing an accident is only going to make it worse and could get someone injured or killed!

All of that equipment accelerates more slowly, takes longer to stop and requires more room to maneuver than your car does. Slow down as you approach it from any direction. Move around it slowly and cautiously and let's just keep everyone, including you, safe!