Safety Concerns: Grain Boxes and Play Bins

The number of farms offering agritourism activities over the last several decades has greatly increased. This is
Good for visitors: provides education and entertainment.
Good for farmers: increases revenues and diversifies income.
However, along with the benefits comes the responsibility to keep visitors safe. An increasingly popular activity that can be hazardous to children is providing corn or other grains for children to play in. These structures, often called corn or grain boxes, pools, or play bins, are host to a variety of safety concerns.

Primary safety concerns

Concern	Description
Choking	can result from inhaling grain or sticking grain in mouth
Allergies	may be caused by grain or chemicals used in grain production
Animals	may be attracted by "food source", resulting in animal bites or illness caused by germs/contact with feces
Ventilation	concerns may result from a lack of windows or openings on re-purposed grain bins
Supervision	can be inhibited by lack of windows or openings
Crowding	often occurs in re-purposed grain bins, which cannot be enlarged to provide more room

Sending an unsafe message: young children's ability to distinguish play situations from the real world is not well differentiated. When they "play" in grain, we are telling them this is "okay and fun". When they go to a "regular" farm, they are going to associate the grain bin and grain with playtime and may not have the cognitive ability to recognize this as a different situation. This can make it harder for the child to understand the risks associated with grain on regular farms.

Recommended Alternatives

Alternative	Details
Sandbox or Sand Tables	- Can be expanded to add more room - Add toy tractors and farm toys - Provide awning canopy for shade - Cover at night or when not in use
Water Tables	- Tables with water a youth can play with - Add farm toys - Empty at night or when not in use
Dirt Tables	- Tables with dirt that youth can play with - Can use to teach kids basics of gardening - Add farm toys, plastic plants, garden tools, etc. - Cover at night or when not in use

National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

Grain Handling Safety Coalition

More information is available at www.safeagritourism.org.