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Madison, Wis. [April 24, 2023] - With planting season ramping up, motorists will begin to see more large, slow-moving farm equipment on roadways. FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is encouraging drivers to slow down, be patient and be alert when coming across farm machinery on roads this spring.

"Getting crops in the ground in a timely manner, especially in dealing with unpredictability of spring-time weather, is essential for not only the livelihood of farmers, but to ensure that we are able to enjoy the foods that we love as well, says John Rettler, FarmFirst President and dairy farmer from Neosho, Wis., "Motorists and farmers need to be alert and remember a few simple driving tips in order to stay safe."

The Iowa DOT offers these tips for motorists for driving in areas where farm equipment on the road is common:

- Be alert and always watch for slow-moving vehicles, especially during planting and harvest seasons. Slow-moving vehicles can be identified by the slow-moving vehicle emblem, an orange triangle with red borders.
- Don't tailgate. All it accomplishes is making the equipment driver stressed and distracted. Leave at least 50 feet between you and the farm equipment.
- Watch for turns. A farmer may use hand signals as well as blinkers. Farm machinery makes wide turns, and often directly into a field, where there is no obvious road. Also, tractors may sometimes look like they're turning right or pulling over, when in reality the farmer is swinging wide to make a turn. Never assume and try to pass when this happens.
- Be patient. Don't assume the equipment operator can move aside to let you pass. The shoulder may not be able to support a heavy farm vehicle.
- Slow down as soon as you see farm equipment. It only takes seconds for a vehicle driving at 55 miles per hour to rear-end a tractor that's 300–400 feet away.

Farmers should also be aware of practices they can implement to ensure that they are more visible on the roads. The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center offers the following tips:

- Ensure lights, flashers, reflectors, and signals all work properly.
- Check wiring and connections.
- Make sure that the familiar slow-moving vehicle sign can be seen.
- See if hitched equipment obscures lights or signage. The drivers behind you may not realize you're making a left-hand turn if they can't see your signals.
- Make sure your load is balanced and securely mounted.
- If possible, transport your farm equipment during low-traffic periods of the day. Avoid driving at night or in low light conditions.
- Consider waiting for good weather and a high visibility index to move your equipment. Weather apps on your phone may help you keep an eye on the local forecast and any weather advisories.
- Be familiar with the road you'll be traveling. Mark where potholes, sharp curves, narrow bridges, loose gravel, or weak shoulders are and be prepared for them.

Motorists and farmers can work together to ensure a safe spring planting season on our rural roads.

FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, established in 2013 and based in Madison, Wis., represents farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana by providing legislative and regulatory advocacy, dairy marketing services, disaster protection, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion. Learn more about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative by visiting: www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com.

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