

# AG6

## COSHH essentials for farmers

This information will help employers, the self-employed and contractors comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice using RPE.

It covers the key points you need to follow to help reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

See sheet AG9, *Straw chopping and blowing for mechanised bale opening*.

### Main points

- High dust levels can be produced opening bales manually.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Health surveillance is usually needed - see sheet G402.

# Opening hay, haylage and silage bales

## Control approach R

### Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

#### Hazard

- ✓ Dusts and spores are produced from handling dry hay, haylage and silage. These can cause lung diseases such as asthma and farmer's lung.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational lung diseases developing - this means short-term as well as long-term exposure.
- ✓ If an individual develops occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.

#### Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to trained people. Keep everyone else away.

#### Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Properly made hay contains only low levels of spores.
- ✓ Provide RPE for manual bale and clamp opening, and for handling material that might be mouldy.
- ✓ Handle hay, haylage and silage gently to avoid stirring up dust.

#### *Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)*

- ✓ RPE is needed where breathing dust is unavoidable.
- ✓ Powered or air-fed RPE is more comfortable to wear.
- ✓ Select RPE that suits the wearer, the job and the work environment.
- ✓ Use RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 10. See sheet R2.
- ✓ Disposable RPE, type FFP2, is acceptable. Don't use 'nuisance dust' masks.
- ✓ Make sure that RPE fits properly - get advice from your supplier or read the instructions on the box.
- ✓ Train workers to check their RPE works properly before use and to put it on before entering the shed.
- ✓ Replace RPE filters as recommended by the supplier. Throw away disposable RPE at the end of the day, or sooner if heavily soiled.
- ✓ Keep RPE clean and store it away from dust.

#### Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Follow instructions in maintenance manuals - keep equipment in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ Look for signs of damage and make repairs.
- ✓ Examine and test non-disposable RPE thoroughly at least once every three months.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.

### Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Use gentle shovelling and a Type H vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter, or wet clean to avoid stirring up dust.

**Caution: Don't use a brush or compressed air, and never use compressed air to remove dust from clothing.**

### Health surveillance

- ✓ There is a chance of asthma developing, even with good controls in place. Use health surveillance - see Sheet G402.
- ✓ Ask an occupational physician for advice - see 'Useful links'

### Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers that dusts and spores can cause lung diseases including asthma. Show them this sheet.
- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet AG0.
- ✓ Ensure that health surveillance is carried out on everyone that needs it.

### Further information

- *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* HSG53 (Third edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 2904 X
- *Preventing asthma at work. How to control respiratory sensitisers* L55 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0661 9
- *Farmer's lung* Agricultural Safety Leaflet AS5 HSE Books 1995
- See [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm) for other advice on health and safety risks in agriculture.

### Useful links

- For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at [www.bohs.org](http://www.bohs.org) for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see [www.nhsplus.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsplus.nhs.uk).

This document is available at: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/) and [www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/)

**This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

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### Employee checklist

- Is your RPE working properly?
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, get them fixed. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.