

AG8

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.

Main points

- High dust and spore levels can be produced from open-cup mushrooms, and from filling and emptying compost boxes.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Health surveillance is usually needed - see sheet G402.

Mushroom harvesting and compost handling

Control approach R

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

Hazard

- ✓ Dust and spores are produced from compost. Spores are produced from open-cup mushrooms. These can cause lung diseases such as asthma and mushroom worker's lung. Spores are too small to see.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational lung diseases developing - this means short-term as well as long-term exposure.
- ✓ If an individual develops occupational lung disease, avoid further exposure.

Access and premises

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

Equipment and procedures

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ Provide RPE for:
 - harvesting open-cup mushrooms;
 - handling dry compost and boxes;
 - removing spent compost; and
 - box cleaning.
- ✓ Ask your safety equipment supplier to help you select the right RPE.
- ✓ Workers should put their RPE on before entering the shed.
- ✓ Powered or air-fed RPE is more comfortable to wear.
- ✓ Select RPE that suits the wearer, the job and the work environment.
- ✓ For harvesting, use RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 20. See sheet R3.
- ✓ Disposable RPE, type FFP3, is acceptable for harvesting. Don't use 'nuisance dust' masks.
- ✓ For box cleaning, use RPE with with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 40. See sheets R4 and R5.
- ✓ Make sure that RPE fits properly - get advice from your supplier.
- ✓ Train workers to check their RPE works properly before use.
- ✓ 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.

Other protective equipment

- ✓ Provide overalls that do not retain dust eg smooth synthetic fabrics - not cotton or knitted.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ 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 lung disease or 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 spores and dusts 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
- See www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm for other advice on health and safety risks in agriculture.

Useful links

- HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books
Tel: 01787 881165 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk.
- HSE free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website:
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns.
- For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com.
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at 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.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

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.