

AG0

COSHH essentials for farmers



This information will help employers (including 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 for controlling exposure to agricultural dusts.

Grain dust has a workplace exposure limit (WEL) of 10 mg/m³ (based on an 8-hour time weighted average). You need to keep exposures as low as is reasonably practicable below this limit. There are no exposure limits for the other hazardous dusts covered by these sheets.

Advice for managers

Introduction

Agricultural dusts include grain dust, fungal spores, animal dander, plant dusts, bacteria and endotoxins. These can all cause lung diseases such as asthma and farmer's lung.

This is one in a series of advice sheets for those who work in agriculture

- AG1 Harvesting grain and seed crops
- AG2 Grain and seed transfer (small scale)
- AG3 Weighing, milling and mixing animal feeds
- AG4 Feeding pigs and poultry housed indoors
- AG5 Seed cleaning (fixed and mobile plant)
- AG6 Opening hay, haylage and silage bales
- AG7 Composting
- AG8 Mushroom harvesting and compost handling
- AG9 Straw chopping and blowing
- AG10 Clearing deep litter from poultry sheds
- AG11 Cleaning stores, sheds and silos
- AG12 Poultry catching
- AG13 Cleaning and grading bulbs, roots, tubers, etc

This advice does not cover pesticides. Follow the instructions on pesticide product labels.

The risks

By getting the advice, you have assessed the dust risk. But before acting, make sure the advice really fits your situation. Following all the advice means that you will normally comply with workplace exposure limits (WELs). Read the advice in each of the sheet(s) you downloaded. Compare it with what you do now.

Action

You may already have the right controls in place, but are they all working properly? When were they last checked? Are they always used when needed?

You need to keep all controls in good working order. This means mechanical controls (eg extraction, respirator), administrative controls (eg supervision, health surveillance) and operator behaviour (following instructions). Look at all aspects of the advice, don't pick and choose. The points work together to provide 'adequate control'. See sheet G406 for advice on engineering controls.

Show that control is being sustained – keep good records. You need to carry out health surveillance for workers. See sheets G402, G403 and G404 and G409.

If you are in doubt, seek expert help. Remember, just because this advice means that you have to change old working practices or spend money on new controls, that doesn't make it unsuitable! Decide how best to make any changes required 'across the board'.

If you do need expert help, please don't give up. Ask the NFU, your trade association, trade union, or log onto www.bohs.org.

Facilities

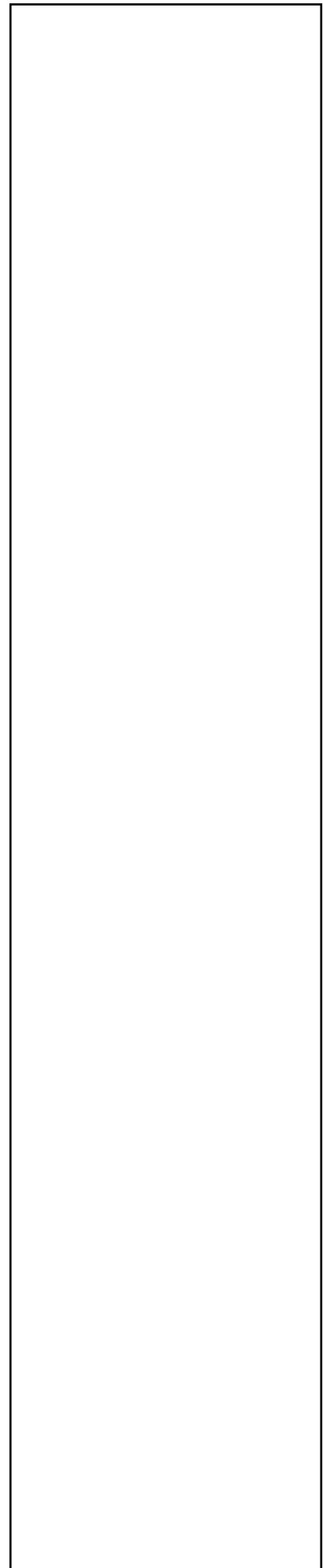
Provide clean facilities: a washroom and storage for clean and contaminated work clothing.

Wet-work may lead to dermatitis. Provide pre-work skin creams and after-work moisturiser to replace skin oils.

Information, training and supervision

Tell workers:

- that dusts can cause asthma and other lung diseases.
- that occupational asthma may lead to permanent disablement;
- to avoid breathing in dust;
- to do the job in the correct way;
- to always use air filtration and extraction equipment properly;
- to keep the workplace clean;
- if equipment is not working - report it;
- to keep their protective equipment clean, and wear it properly;
- to check any RPE every time they put it on; and
- to avoid cotton or knitted clothing.



Train and supervise workers - you need to make sure they are doing the job in the right way, and using controls properly to reduce their exposure. Include supervisors and managers in health and safety training.

Training should include:

- how to use the dust controls and how to check that they are working;
- how to maintain and clean equipment safely;
- how to use and look after personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- what to do if something goes wrong.

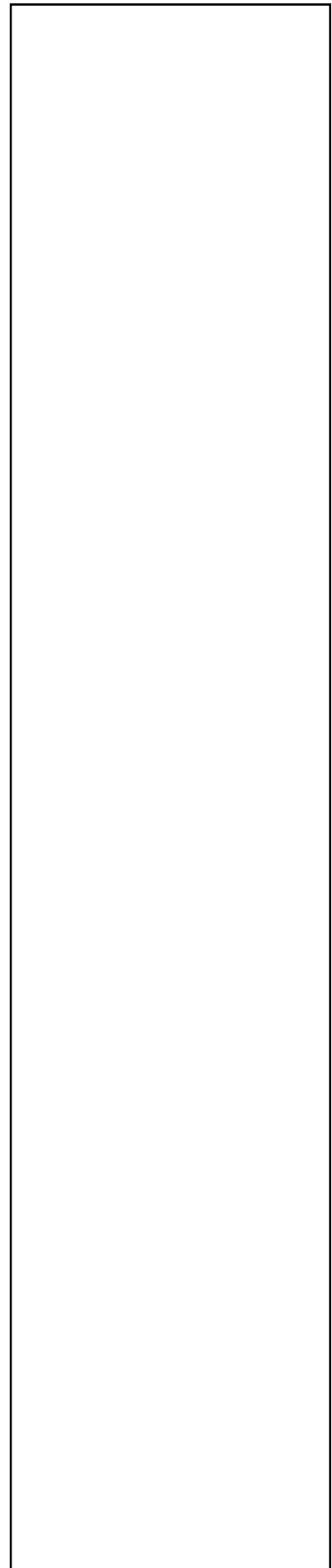
Supervision means checking workers:

- use the controls provided;
- follow the correct work method;
- turn up for health surveillance; and
- are following the rules on personal hygiene.

Environmental guidelines

Releases and wastes may be regulated within the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) framework. You should consult your local authority or the Environment Agency.

In Scotland, consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). For more information, see www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs.



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.