

AG12

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 levels can be produced when catching poultry.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Health surveillance is usually needed - see sheet G402.

Poultry catching

Control approach R

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

Hazard

- ✓ Dust is produced from natural materials such as poultry dander, feathers and dry wastes. These can cause lung diseases such as asthma.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational asthma 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

- ✓ Provide good general ventilation. Open all ventilation grilles and turn on the extraction fans.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ Always use RPE.
- ✓ Workers should put their RPE on before entering the shed.
- ✓ Select RPE that suits the wearer, the job and the work environment.
- ✓ Powered or air-fed RPE is more comfortable to wear.
- ✓ Use RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 20. See sheet R3.
- ✓ Disposable RPE, type FFP3, 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Launder work clothing after each day's work.

Special care

- ✓ Consider immunising workers against tetanus.
- ✓ Contact with rat urine can lead to leptospirosis (Weil's disease). Cover cuts and broken skin. Carry the *Leptospirosis - are you at risk?* card. See 'Further information'.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Follow instructions in maintenance manuals - keep equipment in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ 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.

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 poultry 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
- *Leptospirosis: Are you at risk?* Pocket card INDG84 HSE Books 1990 (single copy free or priced packs of 20 ISBN 0 7176 2546 X) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg84.htm
- *Preventing asthma at work. How to control respiratory sensitisers* L55 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0661 9
- *Common zoonoses in agriculture* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS2(rev2) HSE Books 2000
- 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.

Employee checklist
<input type="checkbox"/> Is your RPE working properly?
<input type="checkbox"/> Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
<input type="checkbox"/> If you find any problems, get them fixed. Don't just carry on working.
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-operate with health surveillance.

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.