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
- 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 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/. 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 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
☐ 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.

This document is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ and www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/