

This carry card provides information on the health risks associated with your work in agriculture, horticulture and forestry.

If you are ill and visit your family doctor or a hospital, take this card with you to help remind you what you should tell the health professionals caring for you. It may help them find out whether your illness could be connected with your work.

HEALTH PROBLEMS IN AGRICULTURE

Work in agriculture etc may pose threats to your health for many reasons, including:

- its physical nature;
- exposure to the weather, noise or vibration;
- contact with animals;
- exposure to hazardous chemicals or other substances.

The physical nature of your work

For example, handling loads or working in awkward positions may cause musculo-skeletal disorders. These are aches and pains in the limbs, joints or back, which may be due to sprains or strains (damage to ligaments or muscles), 'slipped' discs (backache), sciatica (pain down the back of the leg), or arthritis of the hips, knees or other joints.

- Avoid handling loads where possible, or use mechanical systems.

- Use good handling techniques - place your feet correctly, keep your back straight and keep the load close to your body.
- Make sure that your workplace is arranged so that objects and produce can be reached conveniently without stretching and try to change tasks or move so that you use a variety of muscles in the body.

Noise

If you are exposed to excessive noise, permanent hearing damage can result. Consider:

- working out of the noisy environment;
- reducing the noise, eg by insulation;
- the need for hearing protection.

Vibration

This may affect the hands and arms (typically from chainsaws or grinders), or the whole body (typically from tractors or lift trucks).

To avoid chronic backache or hip/knee pain from whole-body vibration (WBV):

- use the right tool for the job, eg a modern tractor with a properly maintained and adjusted seat; and
- drive at the right speed for the ground conditions, avoiding potholes etc.

To avoid damage to your circulation, nerves,

muscles and bones in hands and arms from hand-arm vibration (HAV):

- plan jobs to avoid using vibrating tools;
- select tools with low levels of vibration, eg a chainsaw with anti-vibration mountings;
- use job rotation where possible - take regular breaks; and
- warm hands before work (and keep them warm).

The weather

Being exposed to the weather, especially sunshine or extreme cold, can be harmful. Remember:

- in sunny weather wear light clothing and a wide brimmed hat - don't strip off; put high factor sunscreen on exposed skin;
- keep an eye on moles, warts or skin discoloration. See your doctor if moles etc grow, bleed or itch;
- to use wet weather clothing - being wet can worsen the effects of cold.

Animals

Contact with animals may result in zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animal to human), including orf, ringworm or leptospirosis from cattle or rats. Symptoms range from skin problems to initial 'flu-like conditions which

may result in prolonged illness unless treated.

- Always thoroughly wash hands and arms after handling animals or working in places with rats.
- Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings.
- Wear protective clothing such as gloves where necessary.

Hazardous substances

Exposure to hazardous chemicals or other substances, eg to pesticides, veterinary medicines (including sheep dips), dusts, fumes or materials such as slurry, sewage sludge or fertilisers; inhaling fumes from burning plastic, or dusts created when moving grain, fertilisers, straw, hay; contacting slurry, manure etc; or being splashed with pesticide or sheep dip can all cause ill health.

Employers and the self-employed should consider whether they or their employees:

- have to use, or work with, the substance;
- can use engineering controls such as splash boards, induction hoppers or dust extraction equipment.

In some cases employers and the self-employed will need to provide, and ensure that employees use, protective equipment.

REPORTING WORK-RELATED DISEASES

Certain diseases caused by work must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. If GPs diagnose one of these diseases:

- they should send a written diagnosis to the employer;
- the employer must report it to HSE;
- the self-employed, if told by a GP that they have such a disease, must report it to HSE.

You might contract a reportable disease if you work with:

animals - zoonotic diseases such as brucellosis, leptospirosis, Lyme disease or *Streptococcus suis*, or any other infection attributable to work with animals;

pesticides - poisoning by organo-phosphorus compounds or methyl bromide;

natural substances - occupational asthma from grain dusts or insects used for biological control of pests; Farmer's Lung/Mushroom Worker's Lung from moulds or spores from hay, straw or mushroom compost; or tetanus;

other substances - occupational dermatitis from work involving exposure to solvents or disinfectants;

machines - hand-arm vibration syndrome from work with chainsaws, brush cutters or hand-fed circular saws.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name _____

Address _____

Doctor _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

I work:

in ☐ agriculture ☐ horticulture ☐ forestry
with ☐ cattle ☐ sheep ☐ pigs ☐ poultry
☐ other animals

I work with:

☐ pesticides ☐ veterinary medicines
☐ disinfectants ☐ silage additives
☐ dusts from grain ☐ animal feedstuffs
☐ hay or straw

TETANUS INJECTION RECORD

Record when you had your most recent tetanus injection here: ____/____/____

Booster injections are essential to maintain immunity - remember to change the date above each time you have a booster, which should be every 10 years.

FURTHER INFORMATION

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA
Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995
Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055
Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577
e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This leaflet was prepared by the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee and has been agreed by the Health and Safety Commission. It 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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Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee

AGRICULTURE: YOUR HEALTH CARRY CARD

