

Health & Safety Update | October 2017

Welcome to Strutt & Parker's Farm Research Group Health & Safety Update

The quarterly Health & Safety Update is to assist you in ensuring that you are thinking about topical health and safety matters on your farm and/or estate. Health and safety is a vital part of any business operation.

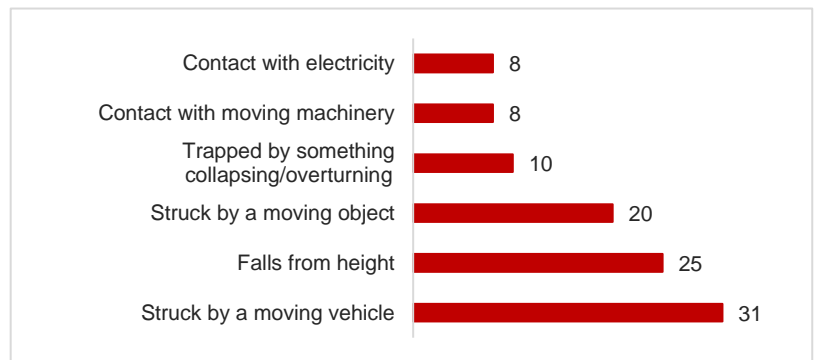
The autumn cultivation campaign is well underway and animals will be looking to be housed in the not too distant future. Farms and estates remain dangerous places to work and recent statistics prove this; as the evenings start to draw in and the light starts to fade ensuring that employees remain safe is essential.

For further assistance or information on the issues discussed below, please call your nearest Strutt & Parker office.

Health & Safety Statistics

The HSE have recently released the figures for 'fatal injuries arising from accidents at work in Great Britain' for 2016/17. The results continue to show that agriculture remains one of if not the most dangerous industry to work in within Great Britain. The number of fatal injuries within the agricultural industry was 27; whilst this is not the absolute highest, it remains a clear leader when calculated proportionately: as 7.73 per 100,000, compared to construction, which for many years was regarded as the most dangerous industry, at 30 fatalities or 1.94 per 100,000. In addition to the fatalities reported within industry, 92 members of the public were killed as a result of work related activities in the 2016/17 year.

The main type of accidents, reported by the HSE, that occurred and the resulting fatalities are shown in the graph. All of these accidents could easily happen on a farm or estate. Every business must ask themselves why the level of fatalities is so high in our industry and what you can do within your business to reduce this figure.



Maintaining a Safe Working Environment

Farms and estates can be dangerous places to work, due to the large number of different machines, livestock and activities that take place; for those who are unfamiliar with a working farm they can be particularly dangerous. To minimise the risk all employees must:

- Observe all signs and instructions;
- Beware of people, machines, livestock and buildings when manoeuvring vehicles and machines around yards;
- Turn radios off (in cabs) when moving around yards;
- Do not leave vehicles or implements in places where they could cause an obstruction;
- Always turn machines off when leaving them, and remove keys from the ignition;
- Always lay heavy objects flat so that they cannot fall over, or place them on pallets so that they can be moved easily;
- When working at height ensure you use a safe means of access, e.g. a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP), crawling boards;
- Make sure guards and safety rails are in place and in good working order;
- Always leave areas where you have been working in a clean and safe state.

Pesticides Use

Anyone using pesticides has a responsibility to use them correctly and effectively and must have adequate guidance, instruction or training for their correct use. Only approved products should be used on crops both in the field and in store; it is the responsibility of the operator to check that the product is approved for the situation you are using it for.

Risk assessments must be in place for the product being applied and for the method of applying it. COSHH assessments should be in place for individual pesticides, where appropriate. All employees should have the appropriate qualification if using, or coming into contact with, pesticides on a regular basis. When using pesticides, the following actions should always be adhered to:

- Ensure appropriate signage is displayed where pesticides have been used or are in use;
- Consider the weather both at the time of application and for the following 24 hours, before applying pesticides;
- Ensure appropriate PPE is worn;
- Wash gloves with clean water before removing them;
- Employees should hold the relevant certificate for applying pesticides;
- Always read the product label if in any doubt with anything in regard to the product or the application of it.



When filling sprayers and/or mixing tanks you must ensure that you are at least 10 metres from a drain or watercourse, the use of drip trays at filling sites is recommended. Always dispose of empty containers and packaging safely and responsibly, do not leave surplus products in areas where they can be accessed by others. Always wash hands before eating or drinking, after handling pesticides.

Medicines

Veterinary medicines are covered by the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006; medicines include antibiotics, vaccines, wormers and medicated feedstuffs. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that there are adequate protection measures in place with regard to COSHH legislation, appropriate protective equipment (PPE) should be available, and measures should be put in place to reduce exposure to medicines wherever possible. Employees should be informed of any risks and the precautions that are in place for each product that they are required to handle, and measures should be taken to ensure the safety of employees – such protection measures should be reviewed regularly. When medicines are being administered the following should be considered:



- Is it really necessary?
- What are the hazards?
- Consider the weather both at the time of application and for the following 24 hours before applying or administering certain medicines or vaccines;
- Ensure appropriate PPE is worn;
- Wash gloves with clean water before removing them;
- Consider who might be harmed and how;
- Choose the correct treatment and correct dosage;
- What controls are needed if any;
- Follow the advice of the vet or guidelines on the label;
- Ensure that the area is safe to work in and that the animal is suitably restrained.

Only competent, trained employees should administer medicines, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that adequate instruction, training and information is provided. Personal hygiene is essential; if users become contaminated due to spillages or similar they should have access to suitable washing facilities immediately. Washing facilities should be available for users prior to and once livestock have been treated.

In the event of an accident, employees should be aware to whom to report incidents, and how to get help; emergency numbers should be available at all times. Any accidents such as self-injection should be recorded and the individual monitored; anyone who feels unwell following the use of medicines should seek medical advice as soon as possible.

Working Dogs

For some, dogs are an important part of their daily working life, while for others the shooting season revives the bond with man's best friend. Working dogs, by the very nature of what they do, are at a greater risk of an accident or exposure to disease. Working dogs are at risk of being caught on barbed wire fences, being impaled on coppiced branches, being driven over, and of dislocation or spraining of joints as they traverse rough or cultivated ground. It is worth having a basic first aid kit for your dog(s) in your vehicle and remembering a few general points:

- Have your vet's number on your phone;
- Always phone the vet before rushing to the surgery, they may provide some advice which will make your dog more comfortable;
- Never give a dog a treat to calm them as an anesthetic may be required and consequently an empty stomach;
- Talk calmly to an injured dog, they are used to the sound of your voice;
- Get into a habit of examining your dog all over regularly, dogs that are used to being examined will be less stressed when a vet has to do it;
- Teach your dog to accept restraint, remember a dog that is injured or in pain may react differently to normal.



Rights of Way

Public rights of way that cross fields can easily be overlooked. Where cultivations have been carried out, it is a Cross Compliance requirement to ensure any public right of way is re-instated within 14 days if a crop is to be planted imminently, or within 24 hours in all other circumstances to the required width (footpaths – 1 metre, bridleways – 2 metres).

Where livestock are in fields it is important to consider fields that have rights of way through them, regardless of whether a public or permissive right. Animals that are due to give birth or that have young at foot can be very protective of their young and in doing so can be unpredictable and dangerous to the unwary; such animals should be placed in fields without rights of way through them to safeguard both the public and the owner of the livestock. Certain breeds of bull cannot be in fields where public rights of way cross the field, and where bulls are allowed in fields with public rights of way, they must have a group of cows or heifers with them. If there is any doubt as to the temperament of a bull, it should not be grazed in field with a public right of way. Where bulls are being grazed, a sign should alert the public to the fact that a bull is present and should be in both pictorial and written form stating no more than 'bull in field'.

Where it is the landowner or occupier's responsibility, gates, stiles or other structures used to cross boundaries should be maintained to a level that is safe and reasonable to use. If footpaths are being temporarily diverted, clear signage should be erected identifying the route for users. Failure to re-instate rights of way can lead to a civil prosecution; if an injury was to occur and the occupier is found to be negligent because it is still in a cultivated state, it could also lead to the Single Payment being penalised.

With the shooting season underway it may be necessary to utilise a beater or a stop on rights of way to alert users that shooting is taking place, alternatively signs can be erected at the beginning of the season or put out on shoot days. Where permissive paths are in place, it is within your rights to close the path on shoot days. This can eliminate drives being upset by members of the public unwarily interrupting a drive, or members of the public being shocked or frightened by shots suddenly being fired.

Signage

Appropriate signage throughout the workplace is essential in the workplace. Signage must be clear and obvious to inform employees, visitors and others of hazards in the workplace. The Health & Safety (Safety Signs & Signals) Regulations are based on a European standard to standardise safety signage across Europe without the risk of it being misunderstood. Signage should be used wherever there is a risk that cannot be controlled by any other means; all signs should incorporate a pictogram as part of their detail; this allows for those whose English is not their first language to understand the signage. It will inevitably increase the number of safety symbols in the workplace.



Signage should be in place from the entrance of farms and estates (this might include a speed restriction, warning of moving vehicles and/or overhead cables, for example) and cover all buildings, machines and equipment as necessary. Workshops are full of hazards and placing blue (mandatory) signage, for example instructing operators to use eye protection when using a grinder, is essential to ensure that legislation is adhered to and that workers are kept safe. There is no need to provide safety signs if they don't help reduce the risk or if the risk isn't significant.

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