

Is your farm a safe place to work?



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What you should know

Injuries and illness can ruin lives and businesses and the agricultural industry is well known for high rates of fatal incidents, work-related ill health and unwise risk taking. Managing health and safety on your farm is common sense and is a legal requirement. Plus, steps to improve the safety on your farm can be simple and cheap. A good risk assessment, an awareness of dangers and an understanding of the nature of risks, which include physical injuries, chemical accidents and transferrable diseases, can have an important positive effect on the safety of the workplace for you, your animals and anyone working on your farm. The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guide Farmwise (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg270.pdf) has easy-to-follow, practical advice for farmers to make sure anyone working on a farm is safe and healthy while they are at work.

Meeting your health and safety responsibilities

Your duty under health and safety law is to make sure, as far as is reasonably practical and possible, that you protect the safety of anyone working on your farm and to make sure that they are not exposed to those risks you should be aware of. There is a certain amount of risk that comes with working with animals because they can be large, heavy and unpredictable. Veterinary surgeons working with your livestock are often at risk from injury; particularly where

procedures are likely to be painful as they may cause an animal to react and become distressed. Good handling and restraining equipment that is well maintained and suitable for the job should prevent harm to your vet, to you and to your animals. For vets, safe facilities and equipment that are in good working order are essential. It is best to agree safety standards on your farm with your vet otherwise they may have to delay seeing your animals until a later date. You would need to upgrade your facilities and equipment which fell short of the standard (or hire safer equipment) before work can begin again. Your vet will be happy to discuss this with you. Communication and co-operation with those sharing the workplace is essential and a requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR).

Unsafe facilities and equipment

By law – the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) – you should maintain work equipment, for example, cattle-handling facilities, pens, fences, gates, races, cattle crushes and safe escape routes, so that it is in efficient working order. As a farmer, you have to meet these duties when you are supplying equipment. The work equipment has to be suitable for the job being done and it has to be maintained so that it does not deteriorate and put people at risk during their work. Your vet will be happy to discuss the work involved and the equipment needed for the job.

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public