

Health & Safety Update | October 2018

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.

Harvest already seems a lifetime ago after a remarkable run of weather, where grass has started to grow consideration as to whether to grab a late cut of silage will be in the minds of many. The autumn remains a busy time of year with winter crops being drilled, ground being prepared for spring crops where time allows and animals starting to be housed ahead of the winter months. This year the feeding of animals, be that inside or outside, will be undertaken where grass is scarce after the long hot summer months.

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

HEDGE CUTTING & FLAIL MOWERS

With the bird nesting season over, hedge cutting has started in earnest especially while ground conditions are good. A good proportion of the work will be confined to fields but appropriate signage should be placed to warn road users of potential flying debris when roadside hedges are being cut even when working in the field. When working on the road, signage should be erected, flashing beacons and all lights must be working and glass should be clean and not obstructed. Working lights should not be used where they are likely to dazzle or blind other road users.

Roadside works should, where possible, be completed outside of peak traffic periods, but during daylight hours in order to minimise the risk to both the operator and other road users. Only operators who are appropriately trained should use hedge cutters, and they should pay particular attention when operating on roadsides and next to rights of way.

Hedge cutters and flail mowers have a number of dangers associated with them for both the operator and other parties, these include:

- Debris being discharged at high speeds;
- Numerous moving parts;
- Contact with overhead power lines;
- Overbalancing of machine when the arm is extended;
- Oil being used at high pressures.

The hedge cutter and tractor should be thoroughly checked to ensure it is safe to use, prior to starting any hedge cutting work. All guards should be in place including PTO, flail covers on the hedge cutter head and cab glass protection.



UNDERGROUND SERVICES

Underground services may be encountered wherever work involves penetrating the ground or if working below ground level. The hazards associated with encountering a cable or pipeline during an excavation vary considerably, depending upon the nature of the contained service, but include electrocution, flooding and the release of toxic gases or liquids. All services should be considered 'live' until disconnected and proven.

When digging is taking place the following practices should be employed:

- Safe digging practices;
- Use of spade/shovel with curved edges and using only gentle foot pressure when digging;
- Digging by hand near known or assumed locations of underground services.

Before any work is undertaken, it should be carefully planned and utility providers be consulted if necessary; having a plan of where all services are located on farms and estates is of great value, particularly in yards. Carry out a risk assessment for each excavation and identify what service is present and assess its risk. The use of Cable Avoidance Tools (CAT) should be used on the excavation site prior to works commencing to confirm location of services.

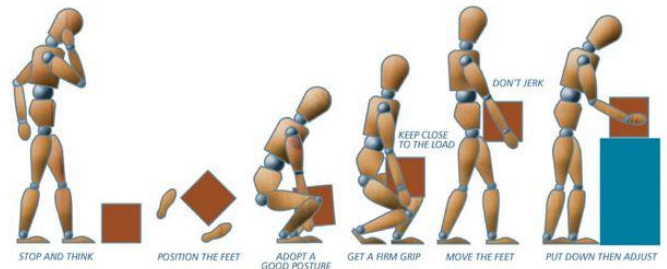
MANUAL HANDLING

Farm and estate work requires significant levels of manual handling. Injuries often occur due to the lifting of heavy awkward loads and incorrect or poor posture. Previous or existing injuries also pose risk factors and can be implicated in the development of muscular skeletal disorders (MSDs). Many injuries are caused or exacerbated by poor manual handling practices and can be a result of stresses and strains over a period of time rather than a single event. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) set out a clear hierarchy of controls:

- Avoid the need for hazardous manual handling where reasonably practicable;
- Take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury;
- Provide mechanical assistance where possible;
- Provide information on the weight and nature of the load.

Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable, for example by redesigning the task to avoid moving the load or by automating or mechanising the process.

Ensure all employees are suitably trained in manual handling. The HSE publication 'Manual Handling at Work – A Brief Guide' is a useful reference.



GRAIN STORE SAFETY

Grain stores are large and often relatively dark buildings so particular care needs to be taken when working in and around them. It is important to consider the following points when operating in and around grain stores:

- Ensure dust masks with a rating of FFP2 (conforming to EN149) are used;
- Ensure cab doors are closed when loading or out loading to reduce exposure to dust;
- Take care when entering or exiting grain stores;
- Use hand rails when climbing onto and off catwalks;
- Where safety harnesses and lines are available, ensure they are used;
- When cleaning/servicing conveyors and driers, ensure they are isolated at the mains.
- Dust can cause serious illnesses; workers are at risk if they are exposed to dry dust from harvesting, storage and milling of grains.

Minimising the amount of dust created (particularly in confined spaces) and ensuring that there is adequate ventilation is essential. If working in grain bins is required, you should always try to avoid entering them until they are empty and well ventilated. However, this is not always possible and entry from the top of the bin may be required. If entering a bin from the top or working on high catwalks, safety harnesses should be worn with appropriate safety lines attached to secure anchor points. Fall arrest harnesses must be inspected by a competent person to check for any damage or wear on a regular basis, at least annually, under the provisions of the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 and the Work at Height Regulations 2005. They should also be inspected prior to use. When working from height and using fall arrest systems, a rescue plan must be in place in case of an accident.

GRAIN SAMPLING & MONITORING

With grain stores full, it is imperative to ensure that what you are storing remains in a suitable condition for sale; as part of this, regular sampling and monitoring is necessary. When entering stores for sampling and monitoring, ensure that someone else knows that you are going into the store and ensure you have a mobile phone with you in case you fall into difficulty. If necessary, isolate machinery so that it cannot be started whilst you are carrying out your task, never enter a store until you have ensured it is safe. Grain silos should not be entered without specific training as they pose a greater risk of drowning than modern barn stores.

Consider the commodity you are walking over and the depth of it, oilseeds in particular can act like 'quick sand' and can lead to drowning. If you need to traverse a heap of oilseeds use crawling boards to ensure your weight is spread and the risk of being 'swallowed' is minimised. If grain has been treated, observe the following safety precautions:



- Avoid breathing the chemical vapours. Use a respirator if necessary;
- For the first few days after treatment, avoid entering closed areas where treated grain is stored;
- Liquids can be absorbed through leather gloves and shoes, so wear rubber gloves and shoes or rubber shoe covers.

Always ensure that you wash your hands upon leaving a grain store and particularly before eating, drinking and/or smoking. Whilst grain stores are ideally vermin proof, vermin may enter the store and rats carry and transmit Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) which can be fatal.

ATVS

ATVs are commonly used on farms and estates, providing a useful mode of transport and work support vehicle particularly for reaching livestock that are being out-wintered and require daily checking, and for game keepers checking birds and pens. Using an ATV outside of its parameters can cause it to become unstable and dangerous. The following reasons are the most common causes of accidents:

- Lack of or inadequate training;
- Lack of or inadequate safety clothing;
- Excessive speed;
- Carrying passengers or unbalanced loads;
- Steep slopes combined with other conditions;
- Towing excessive loads.



Body movements are used to help control 'sit- astride with handlebars' type ATVs. ATVs are designed to cope with a wide variety of terrain types, including steep slopes but, if used outside their safe operating parameters, they can very rapidly become unstable, hence most accidents are due to overturning. Head protection is essential and should be worn at all times particularly when on roads. Eye protection should also be worn to protect eyes from insects, dirt and branches.

Passengers should not be carried on an ATV unless it has been specifically designed to do so and is suitable for the purpose. The long seat is designed to allow operators to shift their weight to balance the machine, not to carry a passenger. Where passengers can be carried, they should also wear a helmet.

More than half of all ATV users have been thrown from their ATV at some point; it is vital that employees wear helmets, are properly trained and ATVs are well maintained. Off-road use is particularly hard on equipment so it is essential to carry out regular safety and maintenance checks in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

ABRASIVE WHEELS

The use of cutting and grinding discs is commonplace on farms and estates. They have the potential to be a very dangerous piece of equipment, as such abrasive wheels are considered to carry such risk that they warrant their own training course, and yet frequently farm and estate workers are not trained to use them.

Inappropriate selection of a cutting or grinding disc for a given task presents a serious hazard to the operator and others as the risk of disc shatter is greatly increased. Discs are designed specifically for cutting or grinding, not both, and, where cutting discs are used, they should be selected for either stone or metal as required. Cutting discs should never be used for grinding, or vice versa, no matter how small the task.



Machines and discs should be checked for defects and damage prior to every use, failure to do so presents a hazard to both operator and others. Where abrasive wheels are being used, ensure that all guards are in place and functioning correctly. Be aware of the direction in which debris is being ejected and others working in close proximity. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be worn which should include gloves, eye protection and ear protection. If others are working in very close proximity they should also be wearing appropriate PPE. Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) may be caused by the vibration from the operation of grinding and cutting machines over prolonged periods so regular breaks from the machine should be taken.

ANNUAL REVIEW

Health and safety policies and risk assessments should be reviewed on an annual basis. Risk assessments require reviewing when there is a significant change to how a task or operation is performed; for example, the purchase of a new piece of workshop equipment. Where work practices or personnel change it is important to review the task and ensure that it can still be carried out safely. Reviewing existing documentation and inspecting yards and buildings is beneficial as employees become familiar and complacent with their daily surroundings, which can lead to accidents.

Consider using an independent health & safety professional for your business to review your practices as they will be aware of changes in legislation that you may not be and they will see risks and hazards that you have become oblivious to as you see them every day.

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