Farmer – Fact Sheets



WHAT DOES A FARMER DO?

Farmers, ranchers, crop growers, animal handlers, and other agricultural workers will have similar functions but perform varied tasks depending on the size and type of their farm. They may work with animals or grow various crops, or both. Common tasks include the following:

- Plan and organize the farm's resources.
- Feed and care for animals.
- Clean or remove animal waste.
- Work with and maintain equipment such as tractors, pickups, ATVs, front-end loaders, augers, chainsaws, etc.
- Maintain lands, barns, buildings, silos, bins, elevators, yards, fences, etc.
- Monitor water supply systems for animal drinking water.
- Negotiate with potential buyers and arrange for the storage and shipment of livestock or harvest.
- Train and supervise individuals who work on farm, including family, workers of all ages, volunteers, and apprentices.

What are some health and safety issues for farmers?

There are many potential health and safety hazards associated with farmer's duties, including:

Biological hazards

- Risk of respiratory disorders, including lung disorders from inhaling moulds.
- Exposure to zoonotic diseases from various sources, including animals (e.g., toxoplasmosis, Q fever, rabies), poultry (e.g., histoplasmosis, psittacosis), insects (e.g., West Nile virus, Lyme disease), rodents (e.g., hantavirus), soil, manure, etc.
- Needlestick or sharps injuries.

Chemical hazards

- Exposure to hazardous products including fuel, lubricants, antifreeze, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, veterinary preparations,

paints, varnishes etc.
- Exposure to hazardous gases in and around manure pits that may cause asphyxiation and/or explosions.
- Exposure to hazardous gases in silos during grain storage, as well as the risk of engulfment by flowing grain.
- Fire and explosion hazards, including combustible dusts and decaying manure.

Ergonomics hazards

- Standing for long hours.
- Sitting for long hours, especially on moving or vibrating vehicles.
- Working in awkward postures, performing repetitive tasks, lifting.
- Fatigue from working long hours or shifts.

Physical hazards

- Exposure to excessive noise.
- Work in extreme conditions, including temperature.
- UV radiation.

Psychological hazards

- Stress.
- Working alone.

Safety hazards

- Working at heights, such as falls from heights, down shafts, etc.
- Slips, trips and falls from wet, untidy and obstructed floors.
- Risks from animals including kicks, bites, steps, strikes, being squeezed against a wall or fence, etc.
- Various hazards from machinery and equipment (e.g., tractors, pickups, ATVs, front-end loaders, implements, attachments/power take-offs, chainsaws, etc.).
- Risk of accidental start up when working on equipment or machinery.
- Working with sharp blades or edges

What are some preventive measures for a farmer?

Please use the links provided above for additional information.

Biological hazards

- Wash hands frequently to prevent infection, and after contact with chemicals.
- Be aware of the spread of animal disease, and contamination of food and water supplies.

Chemical hazards

- Determine which are hazardous products, follow the safe handling information, and label products properly.
- Be aware of the hazards associated with various materials including grain storage, manure, hay, chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, etc.
- Safely use, store, and dispose of chemicals. Train workers in WHMIS and

safe handling of hazardous products.

Ergonomics hazards

- Rotate job functions to prevent overuse injuries.
- Learn safe lifting and manual material handing practices.
- Maintain proper lighting levels at the working areas.

Physical hazards

- Know the hazards associated with confined space entry and follow procedures for confined space work.
- Use mechanical ventilation to control dust and air contamination in enclosed livestock facilities
- Avoid loud noise whenever you can, and wear hearing protection when it’s unavoidable.

Psychological hazards

- Seek assistance with stress and other mental health issues.
- Be aware of the impact of fatigue.
- Have a communication plan when you are working alone (e.g., carry a cell phone or two-way radios, always tell someone where you are going, and when you expect to come back).

Safety hazards

- Read manufacturer’s instructions and know how to use all equipment safely.
- Inspect all tools and equipment and make sure they are in good condition before use.
- Understand the behaviour of animals including their reactions. Plan, in advance, your escape route whenever you work in an enclosure with animals.
- Know the hazards associated with confined space entry and follow procedures for confined space work.
- Do not enter a storage bin, especially those with loose materials, unless all precautions have been taken.
- Make sure all sharp equipment is disposed of in a safe manner.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gloves, footwear, hearing protection, respirator).
- Keep and maintain first-aid kit(s).
- Develop emergency preparedness and response plan including animal evacuation plan.

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Follow safety procedures for:
    - Animal handling.
    - Equipment and tools.
    - Fall protection.
    - Lockout/energy control.
    - Electrical safety.
    - Manual material handling.
    - Good hygiene practices.
- Practice safe lifting techniques.

- Practice good housekeeping procedures.
- Use, maintain and store personal protective equipment as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Learn about chemical hazards, WHMIS and MSDSs.
- Learn how to clean equipment and tools properly.
- Know basic and emergency first aid.
- Know how to report hazards to your employer.
- Follow company safety rules.
- Know how to report injury to the employer or workers’ compensation board

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