Poultry Worker Safety Meeting Kit



What’s At Stake

A poultry farm requires a lot of commitment to specific conditions in order to be successful. The whole process requires the help of veterinarians, regular examinations, necessary therapy, and keeping the cages clean. It is necessary to provide conditions for faecal disposal, sanitary maintenance, disinfection, adequate heat, sufficient light, and space for each chicken.

What’s the Danger

POULTRY PROCESSING HEALTH AND SAFETY DANGERS

A poultry processing plant can process tens of thousands of chickens per day. Common complaints include warts, infections from bone splinters, and rashes from the chlorine water (used to wash carcasses contaminated with faeces). Employees have to do a lot of fast and repetitive movements. They often suffer from injuries caused by the knives, saws and machinery. Cuts and lacerations are continuous hazards for workers frequently handling knives. Other injuries like back injuries account for 40% of all poultry processing plant injuries. Workers who cut or pull the meat from the bone use quick and repetitive motions that put pressure on their wrists and hands. This situation makes these people vulnerable to debilitating conditions of the nerves, muscles, and tendons. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is the most severe type of such disorders.

Other Safety and Health Hazards

These hazards include exposure to high noise levels, dangerous equipment, slippery floors, musculoskeletal disorders, and hazardous chemicals (including ammonia that is used as a refrigerant). Musculoskeletal disorders are of particular concern and continue to be common among workers in the poultry processing industry. Employees can also be exposed to biological hazards associated with handling live birds or exposures to poultry feces and dusts which can increase their risk for many diseases.

SAFETY AND HEALTH HAZARDS FOR POULTRY WORKERS

Respiratory Issues:

- Poultry farmers have a greater risk of respiratory problems than non-farmers. Poultry farm workers experienced more chronic phlegm and wheezing than non-farm workers. Poultry farms showed that poultry growers and catchers were exposed to high levels of dust and ammonia. Each poultry house contains its own complex mixture of dusts and gases. The nature of this mixture is dependent on numerous factors including ventilation, type of poultry, feeding system, and waste management. Dust and gas levels are usually highest in winter. Organic dust is the most common respiratory contaminant. Organic dust is a combination of dusts with bacteria or fungi (fungal spores).
- Exposure ammonia is an irritating gas present in poultry barns. The occupational threshold for ammonia is generally 25 ppm. For short-term exposure (15 minutes), the threshold is 35 ppm. An ammonia concentration of 300 ppm is immediately dangerous to life. People who have worked in poultry barns for years often can not detect levels below 50 ppm. Harmful gases in poultry houses are not limited to ammonia. H2S, CO2, CO, CH4 and vapours (associated with pesticides, disinfectants, and litter treatments) are also present and can cause health problems.

COMMON HAZARD CONTROL MEASURES FOR POULTRY WORKER SAFETY

- Implement an effective ergonomics program.
- Implement an effective hearing conservation program.
- Implement design and maintenance of electrical systems and an effective lockout/tagout program to prevent injury from accidental start up of machinery during maintenance activities.
- Provide required personal protective equipment.
- Guard dangerous equipment.
- Follow OSHA’s process safety management standard to protect workers from accidental leaks of ammonia.
- Incorporate engineering controls, such as improving sanitation and ventilation measures, to protect workers from biological hazards that can cause, salmonella, psittacosis, campylobacter infection and other diseases.
- Maintain walking/working surfaces to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- Implement OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard requirements and ensuring workers are not exposed to unsafe levels of hazardous chemicals.
- Follow OSHA standards that require that exit doors are not blocked and not locked while employees are in the building. Employees must be able to open an exit route door from the inside at all times without keys, tools or special knowledge.

CORE BEHAVIOR SUMMARY FOR POULTRY WORKERS TO DISPLAY

- A strong work ethic through punctuality, consistent standards, diligence in the quality of their work quality, a positive attitude and good attention to detail.
- Take appropriate responsibility and ownership, for good welfare practice, care of animals’ integrity/ethics in the process and site standards.
- A positive mind set, through their willingness to learn, proactive approach, ability to act on their own initiative, and willingness to solve problems and acquire new skills.
- Works well with others, able to give and receive information, show respect for other people, help colleagues and share what they know.
- Adapts to changes in conditions, technologies, situations and working

environments, willing to accept changing priorities and work patterns when new jobs need to be done, or requirements change.
- Resilience and determination, shown in their commitment to their work, consistency in results and willingness to do more.

FINAL WORD

Many poultry processing jobs are physically demanding and involve factors that increase the risk of developing an MSD. These factors include repetition, force, awkward and static postures, and vibration. In addition, many operations in poultry processing occur with a chilled product or in a cold environment. Cold temperatures in combination with these ergonomic risk factors increase the potential for MSDs to develop.