



Health and safety

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Top tips for a safe farm

In this article, we will look at health and safety in relation to farmers' health and the regulations around the medicine cabinet on farms

The principal causes of ill health are associated with manual handling, lung problems, infections and noise. Of farmers with occupational ill health, 50% suffer from chronic back pain.

Tips to ensure safety

- ➔ Avoid **slips and trips** by keeping the farmyard and farm buildings tidy at all times and having adequate lighting.
- ➔ **Dampen down dust** with water where possible, before sweeping up.
- ➔ Always **cover cuts and abrasions** with a waterproof plaster or dressing to avoid infection.
- ➔ Put a **vermin control programme** in place on the farm.
- ➔ Provide suitable washing and toilet facilities on the farm.
- ➔ **Protect skin from the sun** by minimising exposure around midday, wearing long-sleeved shirts and hats and applying sun creams. Wear a hat and light clothing in sunny weather to avoid sun burn.
- ➔ Apply a **high-factor sunscreen** to the skin particularly if you are working outdoors.
- ➔ **Regular health checks** are essential to monitor your general health and wellbeing.

Soil and crops

- ➔ Appreciate the need for safe work practices, including the safe handling, use and storage of chemicals, slurry farmyard manure and machinery.
- ➔ Identify farm health and safety hazards associated with the management of crops, and discuss the controls and precautions necessary to prevent accidents, injury and ill health on the farm.
- ➔ Recognise the need for safe work prac-

Medicines on farms

All farmers have medicines and doses along with needles and syringes safely locked away, out of reach in a cabinet similar to the one pictured (right). One medicine found in this cabinet is Calciject. Can you suggest why the farmer would have medicine like this in the cabinet?

Can you list three more medicines you might find inside the cabinet? Use the space provided to state a use for each medicine.

Medicine	Use
1.	
2.	
3.	



Castrating.



Dehorning.

Activity

Fill in the blanks

What does the term Zoonose mean?	Example: A Zoonose is a disease that is passed from animals to humans
List four ways the farmer can prevent contracting a Zoonotic disease:	
Give two examples of Zoonotic diseases	
State two benefits of a crush on a farm	
Farmers use the crush for various reasons on the farm, eg castrating and dehorning. Explain the terms "castrating" and "dehorning"	

tices, including the safe handling, harvesting and storage of crops.

Slurry

Slurry is a great fertiliser and full of nutrients which we need to help our crops and grass grow but handling slurry is potentially a very dangerous activity.

Slurry should be stored in safe seal-proof pits that is protected by an unclimbable fence or wall at least 1.8m high with locked gates.



Covered or slatted tanks require access manholes that children cannot open.

A safety grid should be fitted below the manhole to give secondary protection.

Agitating slurry on windy days and making sure the sheds are well-ventilated is also very important to allow the toxic gases to diffuse into the atmosphere.

The motto "Ventilate, Vacate"

and Agitate" should be ringing in your head when dealing with slurry.

These gases include methane (CH₄), ammonia (NH₃), carbon dioxide (CO₂) and hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), which are all produced by bacteria during the decomposition of slurry.

Some gases have an unpleasant odour. Some are also poisonous as well as being flammable.

There are two main dangers with slurry – drowning and asphyxiation. There are very few warning signs.

The gases are dangerous. **At a high level they can be both odourless and invisible, so they are a silent killer.**

Slurry alarm

Corey Breen, who studies agricultural science in UCD, has designed a slurry alarm which detects dangerous levels of potentially lethal gas released during agitation. The idea is that the alarm would detect slurry

gas once it reaches a certain threshold telling people it is not safe to enter the shed. The alarm would then turn off once the levels were safe again. "It would be ideal to protect outsiders and young children who may venture down to the farmyard," said Corey.



Health and safety is one of the cross-cutting themes on the new syllabus but it also appears in several learning outcomes, which will be covered over the next three articles. These include:
➔ Identify health and safety hazards

associated with agricultural practices and discuss controls and precautions necessary to prevent accidents, injury and ill health.

- ➔ Discuss the health and safety considerations of using agricultural machinery and equipment.
- ➔ Recognise the need for safe work practices in all agricultural activities.