

Chapter 3 - Dairy Farm Safety

Dairy farmers often work in isolation, facing risks from animal behavior, mechanical hazards, climatic conditions, and rushed work deadlines.

Spot the hazard

Look for hazard related to lighting, electricity, slips and trips, training and supervision of new and young workers, animal behavior, machinery guarding, heavy lifting and carrying.

Assess the risk

Check each identified hazard for likelihood and severity of injury or harm. The greater the risk and severity, the more urgent it is to minimize or eliminate the risk. Consider appropriate changes and make sure new hazards are not created.

Make the changes

The following are to help minimize risks in dairy farming.

- Have adequate lighting for early morning and evening milking.
- Concrete surfaces should be roughened to provide extra traction for both handlers and stock.
- Design the milking shed to minimize physical effort.
- Keep guarding in place on moving parts, e.g. belts and rotaries.
- Check guarding on compressors, pumps, electric motors and grain augers.
- Have an emergency stop lanyard - in addition to the forward-stop-reverse lanyard.
- Have a residual current device (RCD) installed on the electrical circuit board.
- Fit all-weather covers on power boards in wet areas.
- Ensure milk line supports and union joints meet recommended safety levels.
- Cover head-high projections like handles on milk filter casings with padding.
- Keep exhaust pipes clear of walkways.
- Maintain exhaust systems in good order to reduce noise and fumes.
- Fence off effluent disposal ponds to keep out children and stock.
- Clearly mark all water outlets not suitable for human consumption.
- Ensure hot water taps are inaccessible to children.

Strain injuries

Activities that can lead to back strain injuries include:

- Long hours working on tractors;
- Stock feeding;
- Fencing;
- Hay and silage preparation;
- Irrigation.

To reduce the risk of back strain injuries,

- Use mechanical aids, such as hoists, trolleys, barrows and pulleys;
- Use team lifting, planning each task in advance;
- Keep loads small;
- Keep walkways clear;
- Modify work areas to minimize bending, lifting, pulling, pushing, restraining, lowering and carrying.
- Do repetitive tasks at a comfortable height, with the least amount of bending, stretching or leaning.
- Develop safe lifting techniques - using the legs and not the back.

Hot water

- Ensure hot water is safely guarded.
- Have safe procedures for working with or near hot water.
- Make sure hot water taps can be clearly identified.
- If appropriate, fix clear warning signs next to hot water hazards.

Remember

- Ensure adequate lighting for milking.
- Use specialized equipment where you can.
- Plan tasks and modify equipment to minimize hazardous manual handling.