



Preventing manual injuries

The most common result of manual handling incidents is injuries and pain in the lower back. According to ACC data, about 20% of farm related accidents are caused by manual handling. Manual handling is also one of many inter-related risks for acute low back pain.

KEY POINTS

- > Workers must be trained in correct techniques for manual handling jobs.
- > No one should lift something that is too heavy for them.
- > Lift with the legs, not the back.
- > (Re)design the workplace to minimise manual handling risks.
- > Use mechanical/lifting aids where possible.
- > Plan regular breaks and rotate jobs.

To assess the major risks and how to control them, see page 2.

This information sheet identifies the dangers and risks from manual handling in farming and offers recommendations to help avoid accidents and injuries. They will help you comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA).

Farm workers do a wide variety of manual handling tasks. They involve forceful efforts, repetitive movements, stooping, static and awkward postures, continual bending, twisting at the waist and handling heavy objects.

Manual handling can harm your musculoskeletal system (your bones and muscles) slowly, so the injury gets worse over time (a chronic injury). Manual handling accidents can also cause immediately-felt (acute) injuries, like cuts or broken bones.

See the full guide at www.saferfarms.org.nz/guides

Accepted Good Practice: Train workers how to use plant, objects, substances, equipment, and relevant PPE safely. In general, farmers need to give new workers an induction – show them around the farm and tell them about risks and safety procedures and identify what skills, knowledge or competencies workers need to complete each task.

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The Law: The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) is New Zealand’s work health and safety law. The Act requires that a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers. The duties of a PCBU apply to all work activities and places work is carried out on a farm.

HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The primary duties of a PCBU include:

- > providing and maintaining a safe work environment, safe plant and structures and safe systems of work
- > providing any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect everyone from the health and safety risks at work.

Workers must:

- > take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that their actions or inactions do not harm the health and safety of others
- > co-operate with any reasonable health and safety policy or procedure of the PCBU notified to them and comply with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU (eg using personal protective equipment).

| TABLE OF RISKS | |
|--|--|
| Risk | Good Practice |
| LIFTING AND MOVING OBJECTS ON THE FARM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Look at ways to reduce lifting heavy items. > Move your feet rather than twist your back. > Keep the load in front and close to your body. > During long shifts, change tasks around to give muscles a break. > Avoid lifting sheep if possible. Use gates and ramps where available. If a sheep must be lifted, use your legs, not your back. > Lift calves using your legs and keep your back as straight as possible. |
| SUSTAINED POSTURES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Plan regular rest breaks so awkward positions are not held for too long. > Rotate jobs often and alter the working position as much as possible. > For seated tasks (unless the backrest interferes with the actions) use seats that are adjustable, have a backrest that fits the spine and swivels. > For standing tasks provide a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chair, stool or support so the worker can alternate between sitting and standing. Where possible, have suitable floor covering to cushion concrete and other hard floors. > A standing work position is best when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handling large bulky loads, using forceful movements, reaching, moving in and out of the work area often or when lacking knee room or space. |
| REPETITIVE ACTIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Avoid double handling, share heavy workloads and use mechanical aids where possible. |
| OVERREACHING OR HANDLING WITH THE ARMS OUTSTRETCHED | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Use mechanical aids where possible, use turntables, hoists, trolleys and slides to move objects, rather than relying on body strength. |

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TABLE OF RISKS

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|------------------------------|--|
| WHOLE BODY VIBRATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Using vibration-damped equipment and engine mountings are a good way to reduce exposure to vibration. Other choices include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving vehicle suspension - installing operator seats on suspension systems with spring and damper elements - keeping vibration-reducing measures well maintained - making sure workers adjust their seats to fit - using equipment within the manufacturers' recommendations or to a speed that reduces vibration - taking regular breaks. |
| POOR WORKPLACE DESIGN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Get professional design advice when planning improvements or conversion. > Keep the things you use most often in easy to reach places. Reduce carrying distances. Plan and design for easy handling; for example, storing heavy objects at waist height, avoiding the need to open doors while carrying loads and reducing how much you need to move objects around. |
| HERD TESTING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Removing herd test sample flasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design the workplace so workers can take samples from a comfortable posture. > Make sure the herd tester has modern equipment like mini-flasks. These flasks accept a smaller sample and weigh less. > Washing buckets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install a trough at working height in the shed. |

PUBLISHED: JUNE 2016. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2018.

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