

INTENSIVE ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Livestock production is changing dramatically in Manitoba. The farm producer is more a production manager and less the stereotypical farmer. The trend toward larger more intensive production continues. The most predominant in this trend is swine production but this also includes poultry, dairy and horses.

With the growth of production has come more reliance on hired workers and a significant increase in the farm labour force. Workers in the livestock production industry are now working indoors, often with minimal work outside. The result is an increased duration of exposure to the hazards within the production facility.

TYPICAL HAZARDS IN LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS

Physical Hazards

- ➔ Animal contact (kicks, bites, stepped on)
- ➔ Slips/Falls (wet environment, slippery surfaces)
- ➔ Contact with moving equipment (backing transport vehicles, tractors and skid steer loaders)
- ➔ Contact with cleaning and feeding equipment (skid steer loaders, feed augers)
- ➔ Contact with motorized equipment (electric pumps, hoisting equipment)
- ➔ Needle sticks and sharps (innoculation tools, castration and tooth clipping tools)
- ➔ High noise levels (handling of swine, feeding may be very noisy often in excess of 100 dBA, also the above noted equipment may produce injurious noise levels)
- ➔ Work in confined spaces (exposure to material falling from above, exposure to toxic gas levels, flammable gases, drowning, retrieval in emergency)

Chemical

- ➔ Chemical contacts (burns, sensitization)
- ➔ Pharmaceutical contacts (inoculation products, hormones, antibiotics, vaccine)
- ➔ Exposure to toxic gases and displacement of oxygen (Ammonia, Hydrogen Sulfide, excessive levels of carbon dioxide)
- ➔ Exposure to dust levels (Environmental dust from feed, dirt, animals)

Biological

- ➔ Zoonotics (diseases transmittable from animals to humans)
- ➔ Moulds (damp conditions, wet feed/grain/bedding)
- ➔ Bacteria (damp conditions, rotting material)
- ➔ Animal dander (flakes of skin from animal hides, hair, feathers)

(Over)

Psycho/Social

- ➔ Working alone at isolated locations (no assistance or plan for emergency)
- ➔ Managers with limited training in personnel management (no knowledge regarding proper training techniques, poor inter personal skills)
- ➔ Shift work (distortion of internal “clock,” personal stress increases)

Ergonomic

- ➔ Lifting (poor technique, excessive weight or cumbersome package)
- ➔ Physical handling of livestock (herding the animals, picking animals up, leaning into the pen repetitively, holding struggling animals)
- ➔ Performance of repetitive tasks (inoculation of animals, sorting of animals or products, continuous motion such as operating a spray wand)
- ➔ General materials handling (pens, building materials, etc.)

FARM OPERATORS AND WORKERS PLAY A ROLE IN SAFETY

There is an obligation on the part of both the farm operator (employer) and those persons working in the livestock facility to conduct their activities as safely as possible. The responsibilities of the employer and workers to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for safety on the job is enshrined in Manitoba’s legislation known as the Workplace Safety and Health Act. Most self-employed persons, employers and workers fall under the Act as defined under Section 3.

WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYER’S RESPONSIBILITIES?

The Act details the employer’s responsibilities under Section 4(1) and (2). In summary, all employers shall:

- ✓ provide necessary equipment, systems and tools to ensure a safe workplace;
- ✓ provide training, information, facilities and supervision to ensure the safety and health of workers;
- ✓ ensure workers, supervisors are acquainted with safety and health hazards and they are familiar with the use of all devices or equipment provided for their protection;
- ✓ conduct the undertaking in such a way to ensure others not in the employers service are not at risk for activities in the workplace.

WHAT ARE THE WORKER’S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Worker’s responsibilities are spelled out under Section 5 of the Act. In summary all workers shall:

- ✓ take reasonable care to protect the safety and health of themselves and other people;
- ✓ at all times when the work requires, use devices and protective equipment, wear clothing designated by the employer or required by the Regulations.

IF YOU ARE SELF-EMPLOYED?

In the case of self-employed persons, Section 6 of the Act details your responsibilities. In summary, all self-employed persons shall:

- ✓ conduct their undertaking to ensure that they or any other person is not exposed to risk to safety or health, resulting from their activities.