HANDLING CHEMICALS SAFELY ON FARM

SRDP Farm Advisory Service
National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: Advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

All farmers will come into contact with chemicals during their work, many of which pose risks to your health if handled incorrectly. Chemicals can cause diseases such as asthma, dermatitis and cancer. If you are an employer, you must control the use of chemicals at work by assessing the risks in your workplace and implementing and maintaining effective control measures.

This article will talk you through the risks associated with using chemicals and how to reduce the risks to yourself and others on the farm.

What are the Dangers of Using Chemicals on the Farm?

Everyday chemicals that we use without thinking may have serious health implications. You may be at risk from these chemicals through skin exposure, inhalation, accidental ingestion or splashes into your eyes.

The term “chemicals” can be used to describe substances such as:

- Detergents used for cleaning
- Veterinary treatments and medicines
- Oils, fuels and lubricants
- Fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides
- Poisons

Chemicals splashed onto skin can cause skin irritation, dermatitis, burns and blisters. Some chemicals are carcinogenic, meaning that exposure to them has the potential to cause cancer. If you are not wearing gloves and washing your hands regularly, these chemicals can be absorbed into your skin or ingested when eating or drinking. You may also be inhaling invisible vapours without realising it.



SAC CONSULTING
Part of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

@FASScot

HANDLING CHEMICALS SAFELY ON FARM

Farm Advisory Service
National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: Advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

How to Handle Chemicals Safely on the Farm

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) UK regulations are designed to protect workers from health risks associated with hazardous substances.

The COSHH regulations require you to identify hazardous substances in the workplace, assess the risks associated with these substances, implement control measures and, if you have employees, provide training and information.

If you buy a chemical that is classified as “dangerous to supply” then it will come with a Safety Data Sheet which will inform you of the hazards the chemical presents. It will also tell you how to handle and store the chemical, as well as instructions for safe disposal and what to do in case of an emergency.

Once you know a chemical is a hazardous substance you can implement control measures to reduce the risk of coming into direct contact with the chemical. Control measures might include:

- Using equipment to handle the chemical
- Finding different ways to work to reduce exposure
- Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, eyewear, aprons and a hazmat suit.

An example scenario might be a farmer using a rag with cleaning solvent. Control measures could include wearing gloves and using a rag holder to reduce the risk of the solvent coming in contact with skin and putting used rags in a bin or bucket with a lid to reduce solvent vapour in the air from the used rag.

Measures like this can have a big impact on how often you come into contact with hazardous chemicals. It doesn’t need to be complicated or expensive to have a big impact.

Priority of Control

When choosing control measures the order of priority should be:

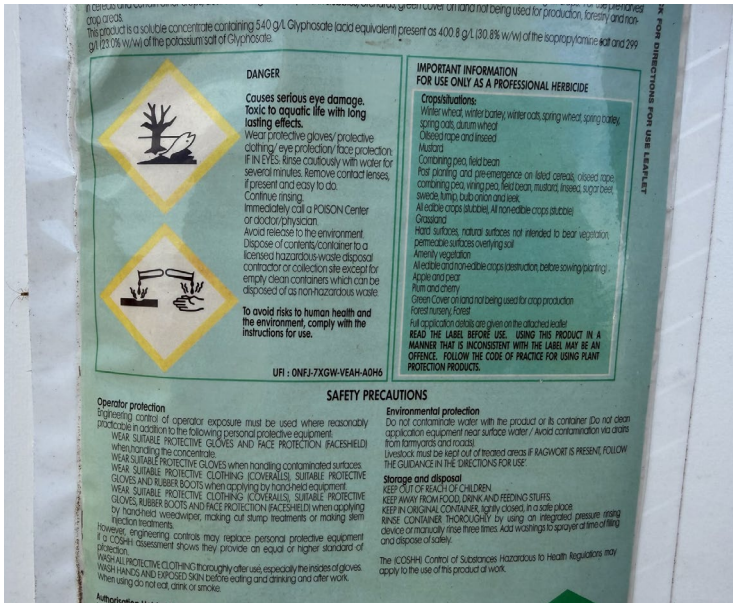
1. Eliminate the use of a hazardous substance and use a safer alternative.
2. Use a safer form of the product (e.g. a paste rather than powder).
3. Change the process to use less of the substance.
4. Enclose the process so that the substance does not escape.
5. Extract emissions of the substance near the source.
6. Have as few people in harm’s way as possible.
7. Provide PPE, ensuring that it fits and is worn correctly.
8. Remember to wash your hands regularly, but especially before eating or touching your face.

HANDLING CHEMICALS SAFELY ON FARM

Farm Advisory Service
National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: Advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

Plant Protection Products

Plant protection products (herbicides, pesticides and fungicides) have their own regulations. Anyone using plant protection products in Scotland must complete the PA1 (Safe Use of Pesticides) training course. The course will provide you with the knowledge to comply with pesticide regulations, safely store, transport and apply pesticides, to minimise risk of harm to you and the environment.



Before using a plant protection product, you should assess whether it is appropriate to do so and plan the application so that it is done safely and effectively. Always use a product in line with its approved conditions of use. Chemicals should be stored in their original container, with the correct labels in place.

Before using a plant protection product, you should:

- Check that the user has had suitable training and if necessary, gained the correct qualification
- Read and understand the product label
- Carry out a COSHH assessment
- Put in place measures to control exposure, including ensuring correct PPE is available
- Carry out an appropriate environmental risk assessment, including checking that the weather is suitable
- Check equipment used for applying the product to ensure it is in good working order

Anyone using plant protection products must have an emergency action plan in place in case of exposure or spillage. Product labels will have specific advice on what to do if you are contaminated or if there is a spillage.

Further Information

HSE "Working with substances hazardous to health"

HSE COSHH advice for agriculture

