

# FARM SAFETY SAVES MONEY

**Oliver Dale** outlines practical steps to good health and safety on farms

## MANAGEMENT

This might be an alien concept although it has been found to be the case across many farming businesses. Dealing with health and safety and getting it off your management agenda frees up time to concentrate on making your business more efficient and more profitable.

Reductions in costs can be achieved in a number of areas and lead to a steady decline in risk. In some cases we have succeeded in demonstrating improvements leading to reductions in insurance premiums of up to 30%.

It is indeed possible to turn risk assessments and health and safety policies into useful and smart management tools. Good risk assessment is not about a file full of paper that gathers dust on the shelf. It is about training staff to increase their awareness of risk and how they can reduce it.

## RECORD KEEPING

I have never met a farmer or farm worker who is not concerned for the welfare of their staff or co-workers. Agriculture can be proud of the way it looks after its people. What is often missing, though, are records which show this good work and systems to help regularise and professionalise the approach.

The number one priority in terms of applying good health and safety practice has to be reducing the likelihood of injury or death – and this is certainly our driver. However, it is vital at the same time to ensure that as an employer you can demonstrate that you had assessed risk, had taken practical measures to reduce it and that those measures had been recorded.

## A STEPWISE APPROACH

Practical steps include basic training with staff in an informal environment and with short sessions on specific issues. This engages staff, makes them part of the solution and flushes out and deals with their issues and concerns.

A little and often approach to health and safety is much more effective than a once a year audit

resulting in a huge and indigestible report that no one reads. Good health and safety is about moving the team gradually along a planned route to improved safety and compliance.

Dealing with compliance and proving, as an owner, farm manager, partner or director that you have made a real and tangible commitment is equally important.

It is a legal requirement that as an employer you assess risk and take all reasonable measures to reduce risk. Where you employ five or more staff this process must be documented. It is important to note that the threshold of five includes partners and directors, part-time staff and casual staff. On this basis there are very few farming or estate businesses that are not required to document the risk assessment process.

This is as many people say to me common sense and I too share that view. However, we are all guilty at times of becoming complacent. Link this to the pressures and priorities of running a farm or estate and you have the type of conditions that lead ultimately to an accident. There is therefore, I believe, a very strong argument for establishing a planned and managed approach to health and safety – in the same way that you might approach agronomy – utilising specialist expertise to reduce costs across the business.

● *Oliver Dale is the managing director of Safety Revolution.*

