



Preventing Manual Handling Injuries

FOR THE FARMER



WORKSAFE

MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES

Many tasks on farms involve manual handling and a wide range of injuries arise from manual handling tasks.

Every year, around one in five claims to ACC from injuries on farms is related to manual handling.

Manual handling is when someone:

- carries
- holds
- moves, or
- manipulates something, in any way, as part of their work.

Some causes of manual handling injuries in farming

- Handling involving high forces – like pushing a solid load or carrying something heavy, eg, carrying large bags of dry feed, holding on to a bobby calf.
- Awkward postures – eg, when drenching cattle or hoof paring.
- Sustained postures – holding a posture – like bending for too long or using only one group of muscles, eg, working on a piece of machinery or driving a tractor.
- Repetitive actions – eg, attaching and detaching milking cups, drenching, using pruning tools.
- Overreaching or handling with the arms outstretched – eg, working in the pit with the milking cups, drenching cattle.
- Sudden, jolting movements – eg, de-horning cattle, handling a bag where the contents shift suddenly.
- Whole body vibration – eg, working all day on a tractor.
- Work organisation – trying to do too much, eg, deadline pressure, lack of communication/planning.
- Fatigue – physically demanding work, eg, shearing.

Some manual handling considerations

CONSIDER DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Redesign or adapt to reduce the risks by:
 - moving equipment and loads closer to where they are handled
 - raising work surfaces, eg, to waist height to reduce bending, twisting, outstretched handling, awkward postures.
- Obtain professional design advice when planning improvements or conversion.
- Store regularly handled objects in accessible areas – eg, at waist height – and reduce the distance for carrying.
- Plan and design for easy handling – eg, avoid the need to open doors and negotiate obstacles.

CONSIDER THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Maintain your yards – remove tripping and slipping hazards, ensure gates open easily.
- Avoid or reduce the need for manual handling where surfaces may be slippery – use lifting equipment, cover outdoor areas, wear footwear with good grip.
- Improve the drainage in work areas – eg, around the yards and sheds.

REDUCE THE RISKS BY ASSESSING AND PRIORITISING MANUAL HANDLING TASKS

1. Identify manual handling tasks.
2. Assess the risks involved.
3. Change the way you do the tasks with the greatest handling risks.
4. Gradually change the way you do lower-risk tasks.

CONSIDER THE LOAD OR FORCE BEING HANDLED

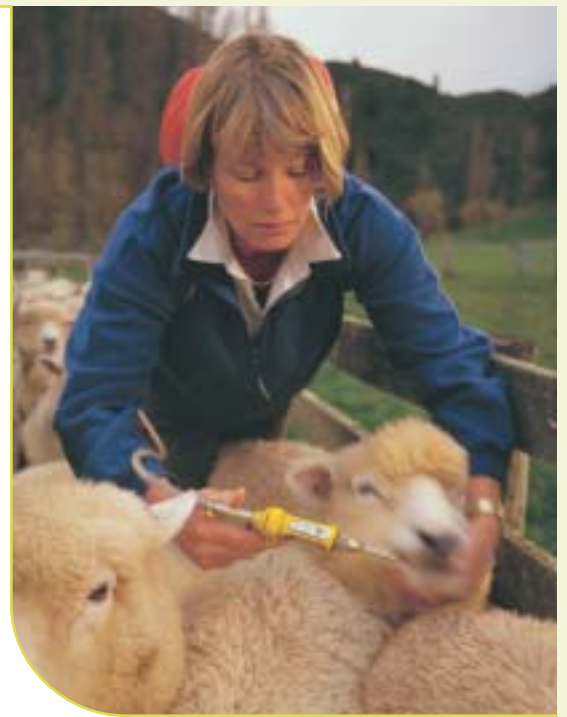
- Make the surfaces of objects easier to grip by attaching handles or using gloves.
- Break down awkward or heavy loads into smaller packages, drums, bags or packets. Split large loads so they are easier to handle.
- Make sure liquid loads are in containers that make handling easier – eg, lightweight plastic with easy-to-use handles.
- Maintain your equipment and replace worn parts regularly – reducing friction on parts or loads reduces forces.

CONSIDER JOBS AND TASKS

- Avoid excessive handling or double handling by planning and storing in appropriate areas.
- Use help efficiently – eg, share heavy workloads between workmates, rotate tasks, spread physical handling tasks out over a working week.
- Use turntables, hoists, trolleys and slides to move objects, rather than relying on body strength.

SOME BASIC RULES FOR LIFTING

- Balance your body's weight equally over both feet.
- Step close to the load.
- Think about the best place to grip the load and the best type of grip to use.
- Apply force gradually, after testing the weight.
- Lift smoothly, rather than using sudden exertion.
- Hold the load close to your body.
- To alter direction while moving, take a step in the new direction rather than twisting your body.
- Pace the work if it goes on for a long time, taking frequent small breaks.



Your responsibilities in the workplace

Consider the people doing the tasks and manage their work. Ensure your employees know which manual handling tasks are associated with hazards, and how to reduce the risk of injury.

- Remind them that tasks should be smooth and controlled, never rushed.
- Teach them how to handle animals – avoid the use of brute force, which can increase the risk of injury.
- Encourage them to share loads, to use lifting equipment, to handle only as necessary and not beyond their capability.
- Give them the opportunity to change their posture regularly, and to move and stretch often between tasks.
- Encourage them to keep fit.
- Encourage them to report early signs of back pain. Most back problems are short term and not serious. The best way to deal with acute back pain is to stay active and keep moving – building up strength gradually and avoiding heavy duties.
- If back pain is ongoing or severe, seek medical advice to ensure there are no serious disorders like fractures or bone infections.

General information on assessing farm work to reduce the risk of harm from manual handling can be found in the Code of Practice for Prevention of Harm from Manual Handling on the ACC website, or call 0800 THINKSAFE (0800 844 657).



→ Further resources for the farmer...

visit → www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention

or call → 0800 THINKSAFE (0800 844 657)

